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THE LIFE

OF THE

BLESSED PETER FOURIER,

REFORMER OF A RELIGIOUS ORDER,

 ΛND

FOUNDER,

IN THE BEGINNING OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY,

OF ONE OF

The First Congregations of Women,

DEVOTED TO THE

GRATUITOUS EDUCATION OF GIRLS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

Edward de Bazelaire.

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CHARLES DOLMAN, 61, NEW

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TO THE

MEMORY OF ONE DEAR SISTER,
"A FAITHFUL COMPANION OF JESUS"

WHILE ON EARTH,

AND NOW,

WE TRUST, BY GOD'S MERCY, IN HEAVEN;

(R. I. P.)

AND

TO TWO YOUNGER SISTERS,

(ONE, FOLLOWING HER PATH IN THE

SAME PIOUS ORDER,)

ENGAGED IN

THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY THE TRANSLATOR,



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Preface.

At a time when the education of the poor, forms so prominent a feature, in the merciful designs of Divine Providence, as manifested in His Holy Church, the life of a saintly priest, almost forgotten in his own country, and, I may say, unheard of in this, who breaking through the restrictions anciently placed on religious orders of women, founded, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, one of the first congregations devoted to the gratuitous education of poor female day scholars;—the life of such a benefactor to the cause of education would seem to possess great attraction. To some few, perhaps, of my fair readers the name of the Blessed Peter Fourier,* may excite

^{*} Many of my readers will only have heard the name of Fourier in connexion with the socialist scheme of Charles Fourier. The advocates of that system boast of their founder's relationship with the saintly Peter Fourier; and as a branch of his family settled in Faanche-Comté, where Charles was born, there may be some ground for the truth of this claim. If so, relationship is the only link which connects them.

delightful souvenirs of their happy youth, spent under the direction of his spiritual children, in the Maison des Oiseaux,* in Paris. In that house of education, second to none in the French capital, may be daily seen the admirable working of the Congregation of religious founded by this holy priest. One hundred and fourteen nuns, bestow the most elevated and enlightened education, upon two hundred daughters of the noblest families in France, and, at the same time and under the same roof, hundreds of the female children of the people receive daily instruction in the solid and useful branches of education. The privileged stranger who has been admitted into the interior of this convent, can alone form an idea of the excellent training and admirable charity of the ladies of the Congregation de Nôtre Dame, and well can, and do, our countrymen estranged from their faith, appreciate their eminent qualities as instructresses of youth. † "They accomplish one of the highest, and most important missions, of the religious

^{*} House of Birds, so called from its having been the residence of a singular ornithologist, who filled its courts and gardens with a choice collection of the feathered tribe.

[†] I was informed by the chaplain on my visit to the convent, in 1847, that there were then in the house two daughters of a dignitary of the English Protestant establishment, who had given permission for them to be instructed in the Catholic faith. For some most interesting lives of pupils of this convent I refer my readers to the "Children of Mary," published by Burns and Lambert.

orders. Pious women, cloistered in this holy retreat, consecrate themselves, under their Saviour's eye, to the humble and laborious task of education. In order to fulfil worthily this sacred duty, which they have freely chosen for their part of the Christian life, they have renounced their liberty, their families, the world, and themselves, and freed from those fetters, which human sentiments cause us to bind more strongly round us, happy in the sacrifice which leaves them no other object, hope, or glory in this life than the service of God, they offer families that grand boon of Christian education which the Catholic religion alone can do, attended with such noble devotedness and such powerful guarantees."*

It is not, however, as the founder of a congregation of women, who, to the education of boarders of high rank, join the daily instruction and formation of the future women of the people; it is not as the founder of an order alone that the life of the Blessed Peter Fourier derives its interest. He was also a reformer, in the true and Catholic sense of the word. Chosen by God and His Church to cleanse the monasteries of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine of those defilements, which the laxity of the age had carried even into the sanctuary, by the admirable manner in which he effected this reform, and the excellent constitutions he composed for the use of

^{*} Fragment sur l'église des Oiseaux.

the reformed brethren, he merits to be considered the refounder of this venerable order of the Church.

But in no character does the holy man shine so pre-eminently as in the humble and laborious station of a parish priest. It is when engaged in the midst of his pastoral charge, that we find some of the most precious traits of the saintly life of "the good Father of Mattaincourt." Varied to an extraordinary extent in our eyes, were the duties involved in the position of rector of a town in the time he lived. Wherever these duties called him, he showed a versatility of genius and Christian philanthropy truly remarkable. In the church he was the good shepherd of souls; in the hall of justice, the advocate of the poor and the oppressed; in the market-place, the free dispenser of earthly food to the hungry and the wayfarer; in the school, the father and preceptor of the young; in the mansions of the rich he was the representative and treasurer of the poor; in the lowly dwellings of the poor he was hailed as priest, physician, and even nurse; and, in fine, his own house was the refuge of the outcast and the wanderer, the council chamber of those in doubt and affliction, the dispensary of the sick, the surgery of the wounded, the granary of the needy, and the home of the poor.

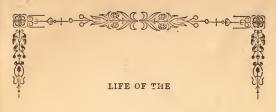
Pope Alexander VII., when Cardinal Chigi, being at Munster, engaged in the affairs of Germany, "found there some religious of the Congregation of our Lady, who had come from the convent of St. Nicholas, in Lorraine. He frequently honoured them with his presence, and one day begged of them to lend him some spiritual book in French, with which to relax his mind from the serious and perplexing affairs in which he was occupied. They lent him the life of their dear founder (Father Fourier), which he caused his chaplain to read to him daily at table. When it was finished, he sent five ducats to the religious, requesting to be allowed to take the book with him to Rome, as he had remarked in it records of virtuous actions which he had not met with in the life of any of the saints."

With this eminent testimony to the merits of the life of the Blessed Peter Fourier, the Translator introduces it to his readers, hoping that they will derive such spiritual pleasure and edification from its perusal, as may make them overlook the many defects of his version.

G. W.

Feast of St. Aloysius, 1850.





BLESSED PETER FOURIER.

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## CHAPTER I.

day of November, 1564, or (according to Dom. Calmet) 1565. His father, an humble tradesman of Mirecourt, in Lorraine, (now comprised in the department of the Vosges), was a true patriarch and model of primitive virtue. A contemporary historian, Father Bédel, the disciple and friend of the saint, speaks of his father in the following

simple and charming style: "His parents, possessing a small share of what is called fortune, were largely endowed with the riches of heaven. This was the case particularly with his father, whom I can only imagine in the form of an incorruptible Tobias, who would have rather nourished a viper in his breast than a sin in his family. The reflection of his virtues, which I have seen in his son, leads me to form this idea of him. As an unhappy death rarely closes a well spent life, this venerable old man terminated

his career in a truly Christian manner; making such a discourse as would be looked for rather from a religious than a poor tradesman. With his soul, as it were on his lips, he exerted the little strength left him to take off his cap, and, joining his hands on his breast, with his eyes fixed on heaven, calmly awaited the stroke of death. His relations and friends, who were round his bed, endeavoured to replace his cap, fearing the exposure of his head to the air would increase his sufferings. He would not, however, suffer them to do so; but said with truly Christian humility, 'You would not dare, my dear family and friends, to present a letter, or make an offering to a prince, without uncovering your head and inclining your body, as a mark of respect. Ah! how different is the greatness of my God from that of man! How many years have I possessed the soul He lent me! I am now about to return it to Him. Allow me, then, to make so important an offering in as respectful a manner as I am able.' And thus the good man died; wept over by his friends, and regretted by his neighbours. This will serve as a small specimen of his sentiments with regard to the majesty of his Creator." It is not my intention to dilate on the childhood of Peter, but to hasten on to his riper age.\* I cannot, however,

<sup>• &</sup>quot;His whole appearance revealed the purity of his soul. A falsehood never passed his lips, and his disposition was so amiable and mild, that he excited the most lively interest by the delicateness of his sallies and the sparks of precocious intelligence which he exhibited. Like St. Charles, when quite young he erected little oratories, the chaunts and ceremonies of the Church were his delight, and he was often seen prostrate at the foot of the crucifix, offering his young homege to his Saviour."—Pillard.

resist pausing before the noble figure of this old man, so worthy to be the father of a saint. "He had," writes the same author, "a daughter and three sons, whom he called Peter, John, and James, after the most illustrious of the Apostles, in order that, excited by their example, they might not content themselves with ordinary virtue. John who was possessed of good judgment and much prudence, became the oracle of his neighbourhood. James, heir to his father's goodness, died at his birth place, leaving an honest family and the reputation of a most worthy man. So much was he detached from worldly vanities and terrestrial interests, that, hearing of his brother Peter's election to the generalship of his order, instead of feeling any pride or complacency, he was inconsolably afflicted at it. He even wept for two days, fearing, said he, lest that virtue, which he heped was founded on deep humility, would lose some of its brilliancy on this acquisition of dignity. The first time the brothers met after this event both shed tears, and the younger took the liberty to rebuke the elder for having undertaken this charge. 'I did all that laid in my power,' was the reply, 'to avoid it, but the religious forced it upon me.' At this they both wept anew. It is of this brother that our saint, three months before his death, recalling their happy childhood, wrote: We had a natural and hereditary inclination to love each other, after the example of our pious forefathers. But my most dear brother and I, methinks, had added to what nature and our parents had given us.'"

I delight in recounting, after a long life of austerities, so lively a remembrance of early

friendship and happiness. These dispositions, afterwards blending with the vigour and courage of manhood, formed the chief features of the blessed Peter's character.

His father considered that, by the law of primogeniture, Peter belonged, in an especial manner, to the Almighty, signs of a vocation appearing to justify this dedication, the youth was sent, at the age of fifteen, to the university of Pont-à-Mousson. He had the good fortune to find there a relative, whose patronage exercised a great influence over his whole life. This was his uncle, Father John Fourier, rector of the university and a distinguished Jesuit, who had just formed the mind of the holy Francis de Sales, then a pupil in the house of the society at Paris. Eminently skilled in the spiritual direction of souls, this priest applied himself to the binding of the ardent passions of his young disciple to virtue, and to exercise them in constant works of charity, study, and penance. An unfortunate occasion soon presented itself of trying the effect of this training. He was strongly attacked by the demon of impurity, but the holy youth flew at once to the foot of the altar and found strength to overcome the enemy.

At the age of twenty we find him at the gates of the abbey of Chaumousey, in the Vosges. This house was founded in the eleventh century, and belonged to the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. It was a rich, independent, and isolated establishment, and its members had shamefully abandoned their vows. Most of the religious passed their time in hunting, gaming, and other

amusements; gold or favour was the only key to admission into the community. It was a matter of much astonishment that a virtuous young man should be received and welcomed by that body. Sensible people discovered in it the hand of the Almighty, and foresaw the part which the new brother was to act in his order.

His training was, however, severe.

"I know from the lips of those who have made the trial," says Father Bédel, "that a galley slave is not more cruelly treated, or endures more hardships than these brothers suffered during their noviciate ..... To wait at table, gnaw bones like dogs, sleep in a corner of the kitchen, toll the bells, wash and clean the house, were their usual occupations. As for the instruction and nourishment of their souls, not a word was spoken, which made these severities doubly hard to be borne." These trials were doubtless reserved for the poor brothers, or perhaps all tasted of them, in order the better to enjoy the infliction of the same hardships on others afterwards. But a novice who brought the unfortunate example of his virtues into the community was, no doubt, made to expiate his disagreeable goodness in a more severe manner. Fourier persevered, nevertheless, made his religious profession, and was ordained priest in the church of St. Simon, at Treves, on the 14th of September, 1588. His great humility would not suffer him to celebrate the divine mysteries for some months. He did so for the first time on the feast of St. John the Baptist, patron of Chaumousey. Immediately after his ordination he returned to finish his theological studies at Pont-à-Mousson.

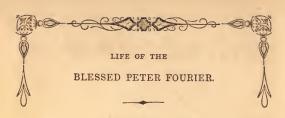
his wounded heart sought repose in the friendship of two young religious, Didier de la Cour and Servais Lairuel,\* who were both excited by like sufferings and the same plans for the future. The Almighty seems thus to have brought them together at the beginning of their career, in order that they might encourage one another to the great reforms which they were afterwards, by His grace, to effect. At the end of six years the young priest was recalled to his monas. tery, to become again the object of a cruel persecution. It would be difficult to imagine the wickedness of these bad religious, did not the holy Scriptures tell us, that the corruption of the good is the worst of all corruption, from which we may judge a bad religious to be the most abandoned of all bad men. "The most depraved," writes Father Bédel, "leagued against him; their every look menaced him, their speech abused him; from threats they often proceeded to blows and other outrages. They often robbed him, at one time of his books, at another of his cassock, which they tore up or sold."

This was sufficiently tormenting; but what was worse, they submitted him to a trial which St. Benedict had, before him, nearly fallen under. "But," continues Father Bédel, "he escaped from this peril by the especial preservation of Him who declares, that His servants shall drink what is poison to others without hurting them. But after this God inspired a good peasant of a neighbouring village to bring the Father a daily

<sup>\*</sup> These two great men became the reformers of the congregations of St. Benedict and of St. Norbert.—Trans.

portion of food, sufficient for his nourishment." These sufferings were a source of great merit for the saint, who never complained of them, but his friends were desirous of seeing him engaged in active duties, and obtained a cure of souls for him. Three parishes were offered to him. He consulted his usual guide, Father John Fourier, as to the choice he should make. "If you seek comfort and repose, choose either of the first two; if, however, arduous labour, without human recompense, will satisfy you, accept the last." Such was the advice he obtained, and without a moment's hesitation he wrote to his friends that he accepted the last parish, which was Mattaincourt. Our saint shortly after was inducted into his cure in the year 1597, being in his thirty-fourth year.





### CHAPTER II.

ATTAINCOURT, at the present day a village in the Vosges, half a league from Mirecourt, was then a considerable manufacturing town. Its industry principally consisted in the fabrication of lace and cloth. Commerce had brought riches and disorder, and an indifference to religion, bordering on impiety, followed rain. The frequent intercourse of the th Switzerland had introduced the germs

in their train. The frequent intercourse of the people with Switzerland had introduced the germs of Protestantism into the town, from which circumstance it was often called "little Geneva." The inhabitants had completely lost that religious faith which the simplicity of agricultural life still kept alive in the villages. The church was like a neglected ruin, and, according to the remark of an historian, the Athenian inscription, "To the unknown God," might well have been written over its altar.

The Jesuit Father was right; it was no easy task to save such a people. The young priest devoted himself to it with all the ardour of first love and of earnest desires long suppressed. He had to deal with the worst passions of the heart, the spirit of lucre and that gross libertinage

which was so strongly a marked characteristic of the age. In the commencement of his labours his zeal cost him much. A young man, from whom he had withdrawn a victim, met him one day, and beat our saint until he reached his house; a woman, enraged at his having separated the sexes in the school, abused and struck him publicly; another, vexed at his having married her son to a girl whom he had seduced under promise of marriage, showered down her indignation upon the good priest in no measured terms. "The Father heard her out with perfect good humour, and when she had gone home sent her a bushel of corn."\* An unfortunate woman obstructed his passage in a narrow lane, on one side of which was a filthy pond. The saint carried the blessed Sacrament, and wishing to avoid her, walked through the pond; "thus," writes on the subject Pope Clement XI., "of two mires choosing the least infectious."

But soon a change takes place; a moral revolution is accomplished. By his instructions, patience and example, the saint rooted out these dissolute manners, and restored order, happiness, and all the other blessings which spring from religion, to his parish. During a perod of thirty years he lived in the midst of his congregation, happy and blessed, like a good Father surrounded by a beloved family. Whenever he returned from a journey his parishioners went in large bodies to meet and escort him home with rejoicings. On these occasions the poor pressed closely round him, as his dearest friends, and

he walked in the midst of them, calling them by name, and making himself a child with the children, poor with the poor, and most humble with the humble. His success in his ministry arose, without doubt, from the singular affection with which he regarded his flock. "You can never know," he wrote to his friends, "the depth of the love which a priest bears towards his children until you become one yourself. All the similes made use of, such as a mother and her children, a hen and her chickens, seem to me to fall far short of the reality; nor have I ever read any work on this subject which said half enough of it. Experience alone can tell the truth of what I say."

Blessed Fourier was not only a good priest, devoted to the salvation of his flock, but also a protector, who made their temporal interests the object of his earnest solicitude. Indeed, how can the clergy be indifferent to the temporal welfare of their charge? Our blessed Lord did not content himself with preaching to the crowds, he also fed them, and the sermons on the mount and by the lake were both followed by the

miraculous multiplication of loaves.

Our saint had an essentially creative and organizing mind. One cannot but remark in him views of civil or material amelioration which show an intelligent charity, and which in other times, in a more elevated position, with the necessary resources, liberty, and assistance, would have produced great results towards an object so natural and desirable—the conciliation of the modern interests of the people with the eternal principles of Catholicism. He had a

great idea of the power of association applied to works of public utility, and we shall see that he carried out his views on this subject within

his limited sphere of action.

"He had," says the old author (Bédel) whom I love to cite as being the pupil, friend, and confidant of our saint, "he had an especial compassion for those tradesmen who, by misfortune in business, robberies, or other causes not in their own power to prevent, had fallen from abundance to a state of want. He founded a fund for their benefit, which he called 'St. Evre's Purse,' into which he placed all the pious legacies left to his disposal, fines, and other sums. When any one of his parishioners was in arrears and could prove his difficulties, a few hundred francs were given him from this purse, in order to enable him to continue his trade. The only condition attached to this grant was, that it should be repaid if the receiver were to become rich. This scheme answered so well that with this money a fund has been established, the interest of which is applied to the like purpose."

At the present day we call institutions by the name of the object they have in view; then they were placed under the patronage of some saint. "St. Evre's Purse" is nothing else but the foundation by a priest of Lorraine, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, of a benefit society, or savings' bank, or whatever else we

like to call it.

Our saint also contemplated the formation of another institution, which would have rendered essential service to society. "The Father,"

continues our author, "had during his youth remarked that in the whole district of the Vosges there was only one lawyer who, seated in the market place, despatched more business in a day than we, with our formalities, get through in a year. Now, to his sorrow, he saw them increase in numbers, without any corresponding advan-tages to the community......To obviate the necessity of having recourse to their assistance he intended to establish an association or confraternity, into which he intended to press the nobility and gentry of the district to enter. Two of these noble personages, with the assistance of the like number of the most experienced lawyers, were to meet on certain days of the week, to settle amicably all the difficulties and suits of the district and place wherein they resembled. If one of the parties contumeliously refused to acquiesce in the judgment, he was to be prosecuted at the charge of the confraternity, without his opponent being implicated in the matter or put to any expense whatever. The execution of this design was prevented by the breaking out of the war. It is, however, but just to record it, as the Father had gone as far as to draw up admirable rules for the use of the confraternity, which were entirely his own work.

If the misfortunes of Lorraine stifled this generous project of peace and equity at its birth, the blessed Fourier nevertheless effected the same purpose at his own house. To his title of rector was joined that of magistrate. He had the appointment of the officers of the town, held trials, judged, condemned or acquitted with a firmness equal to his mildness. He knew well

how to distinguish between the character of judge and that of pastor.....to have compassion as a Christian, and charity as a citizen; but as judge to have neither passion nor bias. He imposed fines upon the guilty, and applied the sums so received to the relief of the poor. Sometimes "he went round to the taverns and low publichouses, upset the pots and tables, and burnt the cards.....he drove the knaves before him, like a a flock of strayed sheep, his zeal imprinting such a mark of authority and majesty on his brow, as to render him so formidable to the wicked that they dared hardly to breathe in his presence." This union of authority, might, in some persons, have diminished the influence of pastoral ministry; but in his case, the tender charity of the priest out of the tribunal, compensated largely for the inflexible rigour of the administrator of justice.

Temperate and poor in the extreme, our saint joined the virtue of sacrifice to the power of love. "He never," writes his disciple and biographer, "had any fire in his house, not even in winter, except in case of sickness, or the reception of some person of distinction. He let a barn, attached to the rectory, to a poor woman, who discharged her rent in cooking the simple food of the Father. He only had a bed for show, as he never used it, but took his rest upon a wooden bench, a foot and a-half wide. In order that every person should be able to meet with him, he stood before the door of his house and remained there, sometimes for two hours, in the depth of winter. One consulted him about a law-suit. another about a journey he was going to make, a third upon his wants; and, whilst he imparted advice and comfort to all, he suffered the most severe pains, and his feet were often quite frozen. He experienced the effects of this exposure of his person for some years afterwards. With the exception of the little he took for his own sustenance, he gave the whole of his substance to the poor, whom he told never to be ashamed of asking him for relief, as all that he possessed belonged to them, -so that these good people grew accustomed to ask him for every thing they wanted. Sometimes it was money for butter, or for milk for a child; and never was applicant refused, God multiplying his means. He informed himself of the way in which each one earned their livelihood, what profit they got on their wares, and the rest, in order to find out the bashful poor: whenever he found any of these, he sent quietly in the evening corn, wood, and other necessaries to their houses, and when he went to visit them he concealed a sum of money under a plate or some other article.....Such as the want of money and health rendered doubly poor, claimed his especial attention, and he spared nothing to supply them with the best food, advice, and attendance. He would often procure delicacies for them, such as preserved fruits and wines; he continually visited them, served them, and watched whole nights at their bedsides. He had a list made of the most needy of his parishioners. These he assembled twice a week, and distributed to them sufficient bread for three days. On Sundays the bread was of a superior quality, and he often added some lard for soup and wine for the aged and infirm."

This distribution was the cause one day of an

amusing scene, which Father Bédel recounts with

charming simplicity.

"On the solemn festivals of Easter, Christmas, and Pentecost, he collected a large supply of provisions, to gladden the hearts of his nobility, (as he called the poor) amongst whom appeared one day, a poor soldier, returning from the war, with more appetite than money. The Father accosting him, asked, what he would like for his share. 'It being Eastertide,' said the soldier, 'I should like some eggs.' He received two. 'Why! I thought,' was the return of the man for this charity, 'that a person of your style would not have given less than half-a-dozen.' The Father taking the hint, gave him four more, asking if he were now satisfied. 'I cannot eat them without bread.'- 'Certainly not, you shall have some,' said the Father, who brought him a piece of the whitest bread he could find, and gave it to him, hoping he wanted nothing more. But the soldier, seeing he had so generous a friend, said boldly, 'Sir, I should relish a little glass of wine with so good a feast.' The Father, delighted to find so unexpected an occasion of exercising his charity, fetched some wine and poured it out himself, and would not leave the recipient of his alms before he had declared himself perfectly content, and prayed God with all his heart that, for the honour of His Church and the happiness of the poor, all priests might resemble him."

Besides these private alms, which economists might blame, but which are, nevertheless, the first right of hunger to receive, and the first want of the heart to dispense, Fourier undertook to establish an organized and preventive charity.

" Talking one day familiarly with some of our brothers," writes Father Bédel: "he told them that of all stations in the world, he thought there was none more desirable to a worthy man who wished to acquire merit, than that of procureur général; adding, that if God, in punishment for his crimes, had allowed him to remain in the world, and he had had sufficient talent to undertake it, he would have preferred it to all other professions, although it might be the most honourable and lucrative. The reason he gave for this was, that he might thereby the better succour widows and orphans, the care of whom devolved on a man in that station; and more especially to regulate the relief of the poor in such a manner, that there should be no necessity for public begging, which he thought was not impracticable..... Man being subject to other necessities than those of eating and drinking, our Father looked farther than to the providing of bread for the poor; he brought them courageously out of every affliction ....."

I have designedly multiplied these instances of compassion for the poor, which abound in the history of Father Fourier, because, independently of their merit, they manifest great thoughts, and show that he was both a holy priest and a good

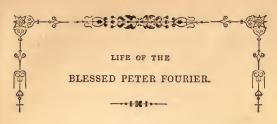
citizen.

In our days, thank God, a good village priest is no exception. Our country places abound in men of true merit and unobserved devotedness. But in the age I write of, an age of licentiousness, the secular clergy had fallen into a worse state than the monks. Of these some little preparation was expected, a course of study was necessary; but the clergy had neither rule nor fixed dwelling,

they took holy orders without any examination, and often without any previous course of instruc-tion. Provided with cures, the only object they had in view in embracing the ecclesiastical state, they lived on their incomes without troubling themselves about their parishioners. The majority did not even possess a becoming exterior; they adopted the manners, as well as the dress, of the world. We must, therefore, transport our minds to this period, in order to appreciate the zeal, the teaching, and the purity of Fourier; and also to understand what the public opinion was on the subject of his life. A surname, whether grand or plain, sublime or simple, given to a man grand or plain, sublime or simple, given to a man and remaining attached to his name for ages, is a true sign of popular esteem and greatness. It proves, that the man so distinguished, has exercised great power over the minds of the masses. No eulogium equals the familiar epithet attached for ever to his name. Fourier possessed this distinction. His contemporaries spontaneously decreed to him this title, the dear, venerable, and affectionate title of "the good Father." This soon became the only name by which he was known and called, even during his life, and in Lorraine, at the present day, especially in the country, he is better known by this title than by his own name. Indeed, his family name is rarely heard: to the peasant, who remembers him by tradition; to the devout, and the pilgrims, who journey to his tomb, he is always "the good Father of Mattaincourt;" and the mother who teaches her little ones the history of the saints, tells them to repeat the name of "the good Father of Mattaincourt ! "

Glorious title! which the more befitted one, who, by founding a religious order, became the head of a numerous spiritual family. This, of all his projects for the benefit of society, was the the only one which he was enabled to realize, so was it also the happiest, and the most important of all.





### CHAPTER III.

HE want of a sufficient education was. without doubt, the principal cause of the disordered and brutal state of the people in the middle ages. The Church has never been wanting in its mission of instructing man, and its tenderest predilections have ever been for the The Council of Lateran, in the year 1179,

promulgated this admirable canon:-

"As the Church, like a good mother, is bound to provide the advantages of education, for such of her children as are unable to obtain it by their own resources, or those of their parents, we decree that a master shall be attached to every cathedral, who shall gratuitously teach the young clerics\* and poor scholars." And Innocent III. thus proceeds: "But as this precept is not everywhere observed, we, confirming these presents, add that not only cathedral churches but also all others which may have the means shall procure a master capable of instructing, gratuitously, the clerics and other children in the art of grammar."

By the side of cathedral and parochial schools were the schools of the monasteries for the

<sup>\*</sup> In the middle ages the clerical tonsure was given at a very early age .- Trans.

neighbouring places; then came the municipal schools; and, lastly, private schools, or pédagogies, which had risen in the fourteenth century in concurrence with the former. But it may easily be conceived that these institutions had no general, fixed, or regular principle in their practical bearing. The one class existed only in the ordinances of popes and bishops; the other, occupied in teaching the highest studies, paid no attention to elementary instruction. Conventual schools were destined only for those who (as was then the custom) were presented to the monastery in their infancy; municipal schools were rare, and neglected, as we may judge from the present apathy of the communal authorities, notwithstanding the law which places popular instruction under their care. Private schools, established in the towns only, exacted payment, which neither the peasantry or poor were able to meet; besides which, they rarely ever were schools of morality. The two sexes were placed together, and young girls governed by masters. No approach was ever made to that system which we call primary instruction. In many places the Church and civil power had, in the midst of wars and continual calamities, been able to save principles alone. Generations grew up in ignorance, in vice, and in misery; the few religious ideas instilled into their minds previous to their first communion, was, to the majority, the sole initiation into life.

When Protestantism had corrupted the sources of belief, and shaken habitual faith, science was called in to aid in upholding it. Thence the diffusive movement of the sixteenth century,

which then began, never to be stayed. The world was, as it were, to begin over again. The education of youth was naturally the first step to be taken, and, to answer to this want, religious orders rose, as they ever do, to assist the Church in her necessity. The Jesuits, the Oratorians, and the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, devoted themselves to the higher studies, while elemen tary instruction found advocates in a body which was to form a complete revolution in the moral order.

In the general degradation the female portion of the people were the most neglected. Scarcely any schools devoted to their special instruction were to be found. Many convents were, it is true, remarkable seats of learning; but their exertions were entirely confined to the cloister, for it was absolutely forbidden for cloistered nuns to give instruction to out-door scholars, and nearly every order at this time strictly observed the cloistered life. So great was the opposition to their contact with the world without, that Fourier, as we shall see hereafter, had great difficulty to obtain an exception to this rule, under severe conditions, in favour of his new community. Thus, while the daughter of the castle was enabled to obtain a useful and complete education, the village girl was left, without instruction, to her material occupations. Or if the women were instructed, they were all corrupted and plunged in the frightful demoralisation of the time of the last Valois. It was, then, necessary to regenerate female society from the highest to the lowest. This end was obtained by the simultaneous formation of schools, which, receiving young persons into the midst of the cloister to educate them, kept them from the corrupt influence of worldly society; and of gratuitous schools for poor girls. Such was the work of the saints, admirably seconded by those apostolic women, noble ladies, and illustrious widows, who, at the beginning of the seventeenth

century, played so great a part.

The Marchioness of Montferrant, neice of Montaigne, established at Bordeaux, about the year 1608, a congregation for the instruction of young girls, which soon increased to such an extent as to number forty-seven houses, in the western and southern provinces. A pious woman, Frances de Brémond, had founded a society for the like purpose at Avignon. But it was Madam Accarie, a venerable widow, who took the name of Mary of the Incarnation, who gave the real impulse to this undertaking. Many women with whom she was connected not being able to bear the austerities of the order of Carmel, were inspired by her with the idea of founding a secular congregation which should be devoted to the education of young females. Madam de Sainte-Beuve, her friend, bought a house and called Frances de Brémond, from Provence, to direct the community and communicate her method. The ardour for this generous vocation received an extraordinary impulse. In the space of half a century, in France alone, 320 houses of religion, under the common denomination of Ursulines, were devoted to the instruction of girls. This object was looked upon as being so essential, that it became, at least accessorily, the end of all new orders of women. St. Francis of Sales dedicated

to it a great share of the rules of the Visitation. St. Vincent of Paul places it among the duties of the Sisters of Charity. The Hospitalieres, whose number increases greatly, adopt it with an especial care of orphans. Convent schools were multiplied in such a manner that scarcely any town was to be found without one.

Fourier took up this movement, or rather he conceived the idea in the midst of his retirement, and he advanced it, for his project dates from the end of the 16th century. Scarcely had he entered upon his cure, than he saw himself surrounded by the evils of ignorance—the mother of vice and of poverty. His charity, as well as his faith, took the alarm. He immediately saw what was necessary to be done, and that a religious order was alone able to undertake the work. His idea comprehended both men and women.

"After many prayers," says Father Bédel, "he came to the conclusion that youth must be cared for from the cradle.....and that the most advantageous means would be to establish an order in the Church, to break the bread of life to these little ones.....He determined to undertake this measure. This resolution was taken on the eve of St. Sabastian, 19th Jan., 1598,\* as we learn from himself four years before his death; but he found a difficulty in the matter—it was the danger of bringing up the children of both sexes together.... To avoid this, and to render the work perfect, he

<sup>\*</sup> It took place in a night of prayer and ecstasy, the anniversary of which he kept during the remainder of his life, and in remembrance of this favour, the nuns of his order make a special communion on the same day every year.

considered it necessary to have an order of women for the girls, and one of men for the boys, who should educate the children gratuitously, so that no child, at least, for a halfpenny a week, should be deprived of the benefit of their instruction."

He first set to work by the men; "chosing five or six young men, who had some knowledge. These he brought to the rectory-house, to instruct and try what he could make of them; but the time was not yet come. At first, one ran away, another asked to be dismissed, a third became weary of his work, so that in three months they all disappeared."

The time had not yet indeed arrived: twentythree years passed before the appearance of M. de la Salle, the founder of the Christian Brothers. Nevertheless, we see that Fourier kept his point

in view.

By an admirable disposition of Divine Providence, (which never entirely disappears, but loves to show itself in the lives of the saints,) at the moment when the object he thought to have gained seemed to slip from his grasp, his work was begun, and soon showed itself in the person of another. A young woman, twenty years old, whose previous life had shown no sign of her future career, came one day to our Father and told him of the desire she had to retire from the world, and at the same time to occupy herself in labouring for the good of her neighbour. No existing order satisfied her desire. This was a revelation to the good priest. He had need of a St. Jane Chantal, of a Louisa Gras, to be the medium of communicating his design to

women. He found one in Alice Leclerc, whose name should be joined with his, as those of these holy women are united with the names of St. Francis of Sales and St. Vincent of Paul. Four of Alice's companions, hearing of her determination, opened their minds to her, and all seemed to have the same desire at heart. Each, in listening to the recital of the other's wishes. fancied she heard her own longings. Sisters in thought and desire, they had long lived together, without knowing the sacred tie which bound them together. They were called Alice Leclerc, Gante André, Claudia Chauvenel, and Isabella and Jane de Louvroir. Our Father heard them, cautioned them, and delayed forming any opinion of their desires; nay, even sought to draw from them different avowals, in order to try them. At length, satisfied with the strength of their vocation, he allowed them to attend the midnight mass of Christmas (1598) dressed in black, and wearing veils, so that the crib of our Saviour was, as it were, the birth-place of this humble and glorious institution. He then confided them to the care of the Countess d'Apremont, Canoness of the noble chapter of Poussey, the rival of that of Remiremont. On their arrival they gave their provisions to the poor and cast the little money they possessed at the foot of the altar, wishing entirely to confide themselves to Divine Providence. Madam d'Apremont was of a noble family of Lorraine, which had given a sovereign to that country, and being much attached to the rector of Mattaincourt, became the devoted protectress of his spiritual daughters. She formed them for a religious life,

and instructed them in the governing of a house. "It seems," says an author, "that God caused them to arise from the obscurity of a village, in order to show that, in calling them to this asylum of the nobility, they were destined for the instruction of all classes, that they were to take care of poor children as their sisters, and apply themselves to the education of the rich, to render them more humble." However, at the end of a year they were obliged to leave the abbey, "because," writes one of them in her naïve manner, "the abbess and the old nuns conceived a dislike to us, fearing lest their young ladies should, in imitating us, abandon themselves too much to solitude."\*

They returned to Mattaincourt (1600), and began with the seventeenth century to gather together the children in a house bought by the Countess d'Apremont. The year which followed was one of enthusiasm and of happiness, which preceded persecution and hard trials. Pupils flocked to the school; Fourier himself took part in it with joy. One of the first mothers of the congregation relates, "that their good director had an admirable method of instilling a love into his daughters for the instruction of the young.....When they conversed with him on the subject of their classes, or of the inventions they had conceived for the advancement of their pupils and the inspiring them with a distaste for vanity and dangerous assemblies, he was so pleased that every one saw that nothing could

<sup>\*</sup> Conduite de la Providence dans l'établissement de la Congrégation de Nôtre Dame. 1 vol. 4to.

give him greater pleasure.....He occupied himself with the smallest things which regarded their manners.....He particularly applied himself to making the religious capable of imparting the necessary instruction to their children. He even went so far as to teach them to read well and correctly, and gave them a method of teaching the principles of orthography and the rules of arithmetic. Every day they received a short lesson from him." A poor priest teaching ignorant lesson from him. A poor priest teaching ignorant lesson from him have been a strange and touching sight. But let us now see what the country girls were, and what they became on leaving the excellent school, where so good a master aided in forming their minds.

The name of Alice Leclerc has doubtless never been heard of by my readers; and yet this unknown woman is a great saint, who reminds one of St. Teresa and St. Catherine of Sienna. It pleased the Almighty to lead her to an extraordinary degree of perfection. By order of her confessor, she wrote an account of her life.\* The manner in which she relates the history of her conversion and the rise of the order is most interesting. "I was nineteen or twenty," she writes, "when I received this vocation. During these twenty years I do not think that I made more than one good confession, and to this I was excited by the reading of a book which accidently fell into my hands. This book was thrown by a

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;Relation à la glorie de Dieu et de sa Sainte Mère, et au salut de mon âme pour l'amour de lui et parce que votre révérence m'oblige à cette reddition de compte de ma conscience." Printed at Nancy, 1666.

young man in raillery upon my bed, where I lay ill with a continuous fever. It contained certain tragic histories of such whom shame prevented from confessing their sins ... But this solitary confession was not sufficient to withdraw me from the sins and vanity of which I was guilty through ignorance. The only good sentiment I possessed was a love of honour, I retained my dalliances in company, and concealed as much as I could my vain and childish actions .... until the time when our good Father came to be rector of Mattaincourt." Some historians say that her resolution was taken in the midst of a marriage feast, but she relates it differently. For three Sundays, while assisting at High Mass, she seemed to hear the sound of a drum calling to a ball, and as she was extremely fond of dancing, as she expresses it, she took delight in the sound. But at one time she fancied she saw a demon seizing the drum, draw after him a train of youths and girls. "Then," she continues, "it seemed as if all my interior had been changed, and that a new mind was put in its place. I abandoned all my habits of vanity . . . and made a vow of chastity without consulting any one about it. This alarmed my parents and all the neighbours, and the more so, as devotion was a new thing in Mattaincourt. I went to see the rector, our good Father, for the first time, and told him my design. When I prayed to God the thought always came into my mind, of the necessity of a new religious house, where women might practise all manner of good works. This feeling became so strong, that I immediately went and proposed it to our good Father, begging him to let me do something towards bringing it about; but he would not, telling me of the difficulty of finding young women capable and willing to receive this new vocation. In less than six weeks or two months, three girls came successively to speak to me on this subject........Your reverend fathers (the Jesuits) of Pont-à Mousson were informed of all that passed, and gave their advice at the instances of our good Father, who took the pains to write to them......"

The company of Jesus was then engaged in every good work, and particularly in the educational movement. It was before the image of its sainted founder, that Alice felt herself called to teach, in a vision similar to that which has just been mentioned of Fourier. "One night methought I was in one of your houses, where there was a cloister and a great many fathers..... And I, holding a rake, with which they take up hay in the meadows, went about collecting together all the little pieces of straw which were in the cloister, to make a profit by them. The fathers took no notice of me, and seemed rather to despise what I was about; but one of them who appeared to be very venerable, and to have authority over the others, regarded me mildly, and made me a sign to persevere in my work. Having come to myself, I understood that it was St. Ignatius, who encouraged me to undertake the instruction of girls, who were then as little esteemed as straws. I. at the same time, heard a voice say, 'I desire that these little souls, who are abandoned like bastard children by their mother, should henceforth find a mother in you." And she became their mother, in effect, bearing these little aban-

doned ones in her heart. Nor was she a mother to them alone, but to all that train of religious, who have not ceased to be their mothers in grace. The congregation recognise her as their foundress, and place her at the right hand of Fourier. Her character, also, bears a great resemblance to hisit is formed of the same charity and the same selfdenial. This generous soul writes in one of her meditations: "I have always had a great desire to die ever since I knew the truth; but I am well content to remain here as long as it shall please God, and even when it shall be His good pleasure to call me hence. I am content if such were to be His holy will not to enjoy the glory of the blessed, provided I hear Him praised and blessed by them." Supernatural gifts of devotedness are recorded of her. She kissed, as St. Elizabeth did, the wounds of a leper, and drank a vomit in which there were probably some portion of the blessed Eucharist. She possessed an astonishing force over herself. "Our mother," writes one of her companions, "being superior at Nancy, saw from her window, on the feast of All Saints, a number of persons of distinction in the cemetery obtaining prayers for the faithful departed, and a multitude of poor people and little children offering to say the seven penitential psalms for a penny, as was the custom of the country. The mother, thinking this a very humiliating action, took her breviary and went and placed herself among these people to conquer her pride. The third person to whom she addressed herself, as an especial act of mortification, was an honourable member of her own family, who was counsellor of his royal highness. He was so confused

and surprised at seeing her that he immediately gave her a crown, and drawing her aside said to her. 'It is very wrong of you, my cousin, not to mention your wants; I would have given orders to prevent you from coming begging here with these poor people.' She gave him a sweet smile and thanked him. ..... When she returned from Nancy to Mattaincourt, she found her mother on the point of death. The good mother was sent to her by our Reverend Father (Fourier) with a companion to console and aid her in her passage to eternity. While the dying woman was in convulsions, immediately before death, the Reverend Father, to exercise her obedience, commanded her (Alice) to go immediately and prepare the altar for a function which was about to take place. Our good mother, without showing any repugnance, left immediately.....though since she has been heard to say that she never made a greater effort to do anything as she did to leave her mother at that moment."\*

Those who may be tempted to see in this nothing but cruelty, and ask what good such acts of singularity can effect, know little of human kind. Nothing can daunt a mind capable of overcoming to such an extent the weaknesses and feelings of nature. Thus we see this delicate woman, apparently very weak, become an intrepid labourer. She shows a wonderful activity, founds houses, makes jour-

<sup>\*</sup> Eclaircissements sur la relation d'Alix Leclerc, par la Mère Angélique Milly, deuxième superieure du monastère de Nancy. 1666.

nies, carries on correspondence, encourages and supports her sisters in time of great privation, and preserves a sweet serenity in all kinds of difficulties.

Fourier sent her to Paris in 1615, with Sister Angelica Milly, to study the system of the Ursulines in the management of their schools, "in order," as he writes in one of his letters, "to see whether there be anything in their rule and method of teaching more noble, elevated, and perfect than in our congregation, and worthy of our imitation." Alice was received with much regard by Madam de Saint-Beuve. She remained for two months with these religious, whom she edified greatly by her humility. "As soon as they had left the refectory she managed to escape from her companions to go into the kitchen, to wash the plates and clean up and assist the cook ..... During Holy Week she twice obtained permission from the reverend mother to receive the discipline of the rod, in the middle of the refectory, during dinner."\* Madam de Saint-Beuve conceived so high an idea of the Lorraine congregation, that she wished to unite it with her own; but on consulting with M. de Bérulle, it was thought that each institution had its distinct mission, and should be left quite independent. Mother Alice, therefore, returned and occupied herself with the care of her charge and with love for her schools. "I cannot express or explain," writes her sister Angelica, "the zeal she had for the instruction of children; God having especially chosen her

<sup>\*</sup> Eclaircissements, &c.

for this vocation, had bestowed upon her extraordinary gifts, manners, and address, which was not possessed by others." The same sister thus describes her: "She was of a mild and obliging disposition and agreeable manners; her modesty was accompanied by a certain gravity, grace, and sweetness, which, while it excited admiration, made her to be feared and loved. Her presence imposed respect and reserve upon those who conversed with her. She was tall, straight, and well made; her shape and carriage were excellent. She was fair, her skin was white and delicate, her eyes blue, her nose was rather large, her mouth fine, though rather flat. Her mind and judgment were perfect, she was somewhat reserved and circumspect in her speech, and was of an ever tranquil and equal humour..... At her sight or speech one felt a certain Divine spirit, which excited one to retire into oneself." She died in 1622, having attained her fortyseventh year. Her days had been shortened by labour and mortification. The latter years of her life were marked by horrible sufferings and frightful temptations, in the midst of which her faith, courage, and piety shone resplendent, and singularly increased the reputation for sanctity which she had some time enjoyed. At her last sickness all the town was in commotion, as at the approach of a great misfortune. The Princess of Lorraine left her cloister to pass whole days at the bedside of the sick woman, and the reigning duchess hastened to attend on her. At her death crowds pressed at the convent gate, and they were obliged to satisfy the popular devotion in admitting them to see the body of the departed. For three days there was a continual stream of visitors, who presented objects which they desired should touch the holy relics. The watchers with difficulty prevented them from seizing on the nun's robes, in which the body was clothed. She looked so beautiful in death that Duke Henry could not take his eyes off her, saying that he was surprised that, "having a natural horror of dead bodies, he nevertheless felt it difficult to leave the body of the good mother."\* The same prince begged the religious to give him her rosary beads, and the duchess had the glass which she used in her last illness enclosed in a golden case. whole of the nobility of the province assisted at her funeral, at which the Bishop of Toul officiated pontifically in the cathedral of Nancy, which was solemnly decorated for the occasion with the same hangings which were used for the royal family.

The people at once placed Alice Leclerc in the number of the saints. Particulars of her life were eagerly called for,† and it was said that she had wrought miraculous cures. The duke caused judicial inquiries to be instituted, and went himself to the Bishop of Toul to urge the prosecution of the matter, and her beatifica-

\* Eclaircissements, &c.

<sup>† &</sup>quot;The reverend fathers of the Society of Jesus desire to have in writing an account of the holy acts and virtues which you have remarked in our Mother Alice, in order to write her life. They hold her to be a great saint, and wish to put forth her virtues to the world."—Circular letter of Fourier to the houses of the congregation on the 10th of March, 1622.

tion was looked forward as very near. But the disasters which soon befel Lorraine caused a delay, and the proceedings were never resumed. Will not the approaching canonization of the Blessed Peter Fourier be a fit occasion to return to them? Rome is the sovereign judge of such matters, and she should determine the time and manner of acting in the affair. In a work like the present the name of the reverend Father necessarily recalls that of his holy friend, and the reader will doubtless have been pleased to meet with some notice of a noble woman, who

deserves a special biography.

By her side I have placed Gante André, who was also of a noble nature and a powerful instrument of mercy. Fourier says: "that without her the Congregation of our Lady would never have been established." Let us return to our old author, to whom I am indebted for such precious details. "It seems that the Divine goodness had prepared this woman, by bestowing upon her, with a liberal hand, all the necessary qualifications, to be the foundation stone of this great edifice (the congregation), and strength to support all the fatigues incidental to the commencement of any great work. She was of a robust and healthy constitution, and had courage to overcome difficulties without suffering herself to look at the obstacles in the way; her common sense was so good that the best informed men were not afraid to submit to her judgment, and many who had recourse to her, for advice in the greatest troubles said that she was fit to rule a kingdom.....At the beginning of her vocation she slept in her father's house, on a narrow

plank, and wore a belt of nail points, which went three times round her waist."\*

She undertook the erection of a large convent "when she had not sufficient means to pay the labourers' wages for one week. But Providence was always a good treasurer to her, and in order to animate the workmen by her example she put on some old clothes and carried stones to the masons, wood to the carpenters, mixed and carried the mortar, and even dug at the foundations of the building. After this work she returned to her room, where a few herbs boiled in a little water, and some pieces of bread left by others, were her only nourishment she took." On resigning the dignity of superior, "she obtained permission to be kitchen maid and assist the cook, whose pardon she often begged if, being occupied elsewhere, she was not at hand when she wanted her, or did not do her work as quickly as she required."

Isabella de Louvroir, the last called of the five sisters of Mattaincourt, equalled her elders. "Our Father," continues Bédel, "seeing well that this girl was destined for great things, chose the finest graver to impress more deeply the marks of humility in her heart. Whilst they were all at his school at Mattaincourt he ordered her to dress herself like a beggar, covered her head with old rags, put on her a cloak turned upside down, which made her a perfect fright; then presenting her to Mother Gante, told her to lead her about the town from door to door, even to her own relations, to ask alms, as a lazy

beggar, who had not the courage to earn her livelihood. Another time, seeing a blind beggar led by another, our Father asked the guide to give way for the Mother Isabel, who led this poor man from house to house, receiving the alms which were given him, and treading under feet at each step the vanities of the world and the resentment which nature might feel at being thus treated in her birth-place. Casting out from her heart every remnant of worldly affection. she filled the void with the love of God and a great zeal for His glory.....This zeal having obliged her to go a journey of sixty miles from her convent, she was seized with a fever on her return, and she departed this life in the arms of Mother Gante, her dear companion."

Jane, her sister, died in the odour of sanctity in 1635, but we have no particulars of her actions in the memoirs of the time. Claudia Chauvenel, the fifth of this little primitive family, died in 1633. Fourier, on receiving the news of her death, wrote: "Who can doubt that this most pure and innocent dove flew straight from her cell to heaven at the moment when her blessed soul left us her holy relics!" With her ends the first generation. I cannot, however, stop here in the notices of the holy women who form a glory round the good Father Fourier. I must make some mention of other remarkable women, whom he found already prepared to join him in his noble undertaking.

Mother Paula Lombert was endowed with an insatiable zeal for the instruction of girls. As soon as she saw that her duties in the community would take her from her favourite work,

she asked so imploringly to be delivered from them that no one could refuse her return to the midst of her dear schools. "Towards the close of her life she was so afflicted with a noise in her ears that, by order of her physician, she was dispensed from attending in the schools. But she begged for a delay, to see what could be done, not being willing to forego so sweet an employment, except from utter incapacity. On entering the school-room she addressed herself to our good Father (who was then dead) and with filial confidence said boldly: "My good Father, relieve me from my malady while I am engaged in the schools, otherwise I cannot instruct your little ones, and you will be the cause of their remaining in ignorance." She had no sooner said these words than the noise ceased, and she was able to acquit herself of her duty without trouble, so that she was accustomed to say that she wished the school were open day and night, as then she should be entirely freed from her malady.\*

A rich widow, Frances du Jar, had resolved to found a convent of Capuchin nuns, in the town of Bar-le-Duc. St. Francis of Sales, whom she had consulted in Paris, advised her rather to address herself to Fourier's Congregation. She visited them, and, touched by their virtues, soon joined their number. This act caused a great stir. The good priest wrote to his religious on the 28th of April, 1620: "It is impossible for me to tell you, by word or writing, the joy and consolation which I have received from the letters of Madam du Jar. She will be an excellent branch of your

Congregation. My God! how I desire her perfection! She is chosen by Him to be the first instalment of dames and young ladies who will henceforward join your order.".....And on the 3rd of May following: "On my arrival, last night, hearing several particulars of Madam du Jar, I could not refrain from crying with the other, but these tears were caused by joy, by consolation, by hope, by expectation of the great blessings of God upon this holy soul. You would not believe the number of prayers which are offered up for her intention. I do not believe that there has been for many centuries, a woman so entirely devoted to God, and to prayer, with more delight and affection. If the progress and the end agree with the beginning, you will have in her a great saint.".....In effect this woman led a most admirable life. "Her zeal for souls excited her to have a particular care of the schools. Notwithstanding her high rank in the world, she delighted in washing and kissing the feet of her poor scholars, in sweeping the floors, working in the garden, and carrying fuel like a common servant."\* She died seven years after her profession, leaving behind her in the Congregation two grand daughters, heirs of her virtues.

Madam de Gournay was professed on the day of her death. "Yesterday,† (Friday) at the same hour, at which the Saviour of our souls gave up His soul, on the tree of the cross for the redemption of the world, Madam de Gournay calmly expired in your house, at Nancy, her agony having lasted about as long as our Redeemer

<sup>\*</sup> Bédel. † Fourier, in a letter dated 19th Feb. 1633.

hung on the cross. She made her profession (having received your habit the day before) on the morning of her happy death, with sentiments of the most perfect joy and devotion. She addressed such original discourses to God, to the superior, and all the sisters, in such beautiful and fervent language, that the eldest of our sisters were dissatisfied with themselves, and complained that they neither on the day of their profession, nor on any subsequent occasion, had ever been able to express themselves so well.....She was the mother of the Bishop of Scytia, who, with the Bishop of Toul, is the superior of most of your convents, and who honours and loves you all warmly. She was also sister to the late Madam d'Apremont, your first beloved benefactress, who laboured so opportunely in forming your poor little Congregation\* when it was yet trembling in its cradle, despised and threatened by some persons and persecuted by others." The humble Congregation received into its ranks those distinguished by birth, fortune, and dignity. Another widow, the Baroness de Busbach, had invited some sisters to come and found a house in Luxembourg. She would have wished much to have been the first to enter this new asylum of love, but the education of a son and two daughters retained her in the world. Her eldest daughter, however, embraced this happy state first; her son shortly afterwards became a Jesuit, and the other daughter following her sisters ex-

<sup>\*</sup> Fourier used the taminus here in his humility in speaking of his work, "votre heavre petite congregationette."—Trans.

ample, nothing prevented their mother from fulfilling her desire. During the twenty-one years that she lived in the convent, she would never consent to be anything but a lay sister. Her daughter was made superior, and it was reremarked that no nun was more implicitly obedient to her than her mother.

The history of the origin of these early convents is very remarkable. There are few whose birth is unaccompanied by some curious incidents. A sovereign endows one, a lady of title another; but oftener two or three nuns start on foot without any provision, live on priva tions and alms, and in the end establish flourish ing houses. Among them will be found women of strong minds and wise heads, as well as enthusiasts. A convent, at Troyes, was composed of such young women, that not one of them was old enough according to their rule to be superior. The eldest, who was twenty-eight was chosen. She governed the community for thirty-three years, and having passed through all the trials of famine, pestilence, and war, with admirable fortitude, left a magnificent establishment. In a moment of dejection, she had begged of Father Fourier to release her from her charge, but his answers, read by the lamp of the sanctuary, gave her renewed strength.

Mother de Chomédy of the same convent, was consumed with apostolic zeal. She wished, like St. Teresa, to preach the faith to idolaters, and die by martyrdom. She felt a particular compassion for the savages of Canada; and as she could not go to them herself she persuaded her only brother to abandon all his worldly prospects,

and devote himself to this mission. On his arrival, at Montreal, he planted the cross, barefooted, and in 1630 (at the advice of his sister who continually urged him on by her letters) founded a convent of the Congregation of our Lady. Three others soon followed. The religious were not enjoined the observance of cloister, on account of the difficulties of the country, but they observed this rule as a third order. They instructed the children of the savages and gave missions in the woods. In 1730, the King of France ordered a number of these religious to go to the island of Martinique, to instruct the

female children of the colony.

A party of sisters who had been called by the Bishop of Aoste, heard on their way of the death of that prelate, and the ungracious reception they were likely to meet with from the authorities of the town. They hesitated as to the course to be pursued: Lorraine was in commotion, it was, therefore, impossible to return; they resolved to proceed to their destination, trusting in Providence to support them. As they passed through Nantua, the people, struck by their costume, asked them their names, country, and profession, and inquired into the cause of their journey. Their replies were so ingenuous and modest, that they soon gained the hearts of their interrogators. A wealthy man of the place received them into his house; the next day they opened a school, and so pleased were the people at their manners that they built them a convent. It would appear, that this town was in a most primitive state of simplicity, for the historian of the Congregation relates, that "the nuns sang at High Mass

and Vespers, in their Church, which much delighted the people, who had never heard the like before."

The convent at Rouen, owed its foundation to a young lady of great beauty, who having been torn from her mother's arms by a young nobleman, managed to escape by an ingenious artifice, and took refuge in the house of the order at Bernay, near Laon. On going to take possession of the house at Rouen, she was obliged to disguise herself as a peasant, in order to escape falling into the hands of the emissaries of the young noble, whose passion had not cooled during her absence of three years.

A lady and her eldest daughter joined the community at Epinal; at the same time, a younger daughter was about to marry, but obtaining the consent of her lover, she followed her parents' example, and fell a victim to her zeal before the

end of her noviciate.

I must conclude this chapter with some account of the celebrated convent of Chalons-sur-Marne, the first of the Congregation in France. Isabella de Louvroir began its foundation in the heart of the winter of 1613. One of her companions was frost-bitten on the common cart in which they travelled. They thought she was dead, and animation was only restored by wrapping her in a wolf's skin, which made Fourier say that this tender lamb owed her life to a wolf. The priest who had called them to Chalons was absent, and "they remained for some time wandering in the streets without finding any assistance, like strange women who had fallen from the clouds, until a poor cobbler took pity on them, and bringing

them into his stall made a little fire, à la Champenoise, and gave each one a small piece of household bread to refresh them after their

painful voyage."\*

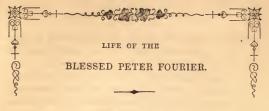
They had to struggle hard with difficulties at the commencement, as the Father had forbidden them to receive any thing from their relations, lest people should say that "they had been entrapped for their money." But their ardour was redoubled in time of want. At Verdun, the children came in such crowds that, to enable them all to be instructed, it was necessary to open the schools at six o'clock in the morning, where the children remained till eleven, when they went to take a slight and poor refection; after this they returned to their classes, which they did not leave till late in the evening. If any thing was necessary to be prepared for the children, the sisters did it in the night, which they devoted partly to this object and partly to religious exercises, so that they allowed themselves no time for repose. They endured great poverty, because they did not wish it to be known in the town that they wanted any thing, in order not to be a burden to any body."+

In another place the sisters found, on their arrival, that a small wooden cross was all they possessed. This was long kept as a relic in the

house which they founded.

<sup>\*</sup> Bédel.

<sup>†</sup> Eclaircissements par la Mère Angelique



## CHAPTER IV.

E have seen the institution

gaining strength, extending itself, and carrying in its dispersion the humble and generous spirit of its founder. It was now time for it to receive the recognition of the Church. Fourier had, at the outset, solicited the approbation of his bishop. The members of the episcopal council, however, did not much relish this novelty. A new order, when there were already too many-an order founded by a country priest -an order, in fine, of women destined to exterior works appeared useless, chimerical, and dangerous. Educated with antiquated ideas, these dignitaries were not likely to see that a new era called for a general revolution in the order of monastic However, after Fourier had courageously explained and defended his Congregation and his plans, the Grand Precenter exclaiming, with a presentiment of the future, (as did Paul 3rd, in the case of the Jesuits): "Truly, the finger of God is here!" the whole council applauded, and the bishop gave his sanction to the rule of the order. The Cardinal of Lorraine, legate of the Holy See, also approved of it, in the name of

the said see, by a rescript of the 3rd of December, 1603, and declared it to be "most useful at

the present time."

In order to raise the Congregation to the rank of a regular order, a Papal bull was necessary. The convent at Nancy was approved of by Paul V., on the 1st of February, 1615. The dearest object of Fourier, however, the gratuitous instruction of out-door scholars, was not included in this privilege. He obtained a second bull on the 6th of October, 1616, authorising the reception of this class of pupils, as well as boarders. These bulls were limited to the house at Nancy. Solicitations were then made at Rome for the confirmation of the entire order. The objections which had all but destroyed the institute at its birth, and urged in the council of the Bishop of Toul, were again brought forward in a more impassioned character, envenomed by the jealousies caused by success. The rivalry of certain orders formed a kind of schism in many houses, and led the tongue of calumny to direct its sting to the whole body of orders. They sought to cor-rupt the mind of the Sovereign Pontiff by shameful artifices. During this time Fourier suffered the greatest distress of mind. The depth of his sorrow shows itself in a letter to some of his good religious. "These great gentlemen, who discuss our affairs, and to whom the Pope has entrusted the decision, say, both in the consistory and out of it, to those who speak to them on the subject, that our daughters are not religious; that they cannot keep enclosure in doing what they profess to do, (teaching poor girls), and that their rule is against the constitution of Pope Pius V. They

intimate their intention of writing to the ordinaries of their localities to know what they are, and whether it would not be better to send them home to their parents.....But what is most odious and detestable is, that they entertain suspicions of them, and tax them with immodesty, and pretend that chastity is not cultivated by them in the midst of their occupations, which you know is the chief object of their profession. Such are the ways of that country!"..... Notwithstanding these clamours, Urban VIII. promulgated on the 8th August, 1628, a bull full of encourage-"Considering that the holy Apostolic See has always had a care, with no less wisdom and vigilance than liberality, of the education and instruction of Christian youth by the foundations of divers Roman Pontiffs and the gifts of princes, but that the public instruction of young girls has not been yet undertaken in the manner it ought be, whence it followed that their parents' means being insufficient to meet the expense, the training of women in the paths of virtue seemed to be neglected ..... we have thought that we should fulfil a duty of our pastoral charge in favouring the designs of virgins offering to Jesus Christ, under the yoke of religion, a holocaust of their chastity, and feeling compassion for the weakness of poor girls, take upon themselves the care of their education. Therefore, having lately been presented with a petition, showing that the Holy See had erected a convent at Nancy.....and that several bishops, on their own authority, had established similar houses.....in which virgins full of zeal advance the public welfare by applying themselves with all possible piety, usefulness,

and disinterestedness to the instruction of girls, admitting within their schools the poor, the rich, and the noble, in order to train them to live worthily and honestly, but especially omitting nothing to preserve these tender children in all innocence, and to embellish their souls with virtues which ordinarily accompany a good edu-cation.....In this task these religious have succeeded in obtaining the applause of prelates, magistrates, citizens, and people.....It is not yet determined to what particular rule, among those under the name of St. Augustine, they should be attached, but they wish to follow that of the regular canons which flourish in their country." The Pontiff then confirms in perpetuity "the institute of these mothers and their convents and houses;" he gives them the title of "Regular Canonesses of St. Augustine of the Congregation of our Lady;" and authorizes them to make a fourth vow of consecrating themselves to education.

Until the end of the sixteenth century the orders of women were almost exclusively devoted to prayer and penance. A nun charged with a mission out of the cloister was unknown, for the "Hospitalières," who dedicated themselves to the care of pilgrims and the sick, took no vows, not being, properly speaking, religious. Fourier was one of the first to introduce this great innovation, of an active life into the conventual discipline of women, an apostolic labour, as he feared not to call it. This work, of the greatest importance, raised quite a new order of ideas. It took part in the general transformation which the religious life underwent at

this period; the Jesuits, the Lazarists, the Oratorians, the Sulpicians, &c., substituted the name of Company or Society for that of Order; the hierarchial titles were simplified or assumed a more militant character, and costumes were adopted similar to the dress of the secular clergy. In this spirit Fourier adopted the name of Congregation, and forbad, by an express article in their rule, the assumption of the title of Abbess or Prioress.\* This was, however, the only advance made at this time; he did not dare to go farther, but maintained, as necessary for an order of women, strict enclosure, joined with great precautions, to the exercise of duties towards persons in the world. It was reserved for St. Vincent of Paul to place his religious in the midst of the world, telling them: "Charity would be their veil."

The prominent characteristic of Fourier's institute is the union of the contemplative with the active life; the duties of Mary with those of Martha. The realization of this idea is his constant aim in his admirable *Constitutions*, the fruit of forty years of study and experience. These are, however, but the development of the original plan of the year 1600, and ought, therefore, to be assigned to that period. They form a large volume, divided into five parts.

<sup>&</sup>quot;The superior of a convent shall never take the title of Abbess, of Prioress, or of Madam, or any other special title which is appropriated to the nuns of various orders; they shall be content with this good name of Mother, which title is the most sweet, the most amiable, the most natural, and one which is full of charity and affection."—Regles de la Congregation de Notre Dame.

The third part, entitled "The Education of Children," is subdivided into two chapters, the first being "On the Management of Boarders," and the second on "The Instruction of Day Scholars."

I have before considered the importance of the education of the female children of the middle class by religious bodies; Fourier's rules on this subject are full of wisdom, and their perusal will afford matter of great interest. But the teaching of the people was the particular object of the Father's rule, and, I must own, has more claims upon my attention. I shall, therefore, give the preference to some extracts from that portion of the Constitutions which is devoted to the gratui-

tous instruction of the poor.

The preamble of the chapter contains the following words: "It is most expedient and essential for the good of the poor children, their fathers and mothers, and the families they will one day rule, and of the commonwealth itself, that they should be early brought up and carefully instructed in the fear of God, and as much as possible, in every thing which can be of service to them in enabling them to get their living." This is to be done with a view of preventing them from falling into misery. Nothing, indeed, tends so much to this as accustoming the women to labour. The rule adds: "The nuns will strive to teach their little scholars whatever lies in their power as religious to do, and which will be fitting for girls in the world to practice, to please God, their parents, and others belonging to them. To dispose them in such manner, as to make them possess a becoming exterior, joined to a pure interior; to exercise them in the holy

love of God and a sincere charity for their neighbours; to conduct themselves wisely among the rich and great of the earth, and in times of poverty, neglect, and want; to enable them to see and provide in all prudence, and in time for the necessities of the present life, and the wants of their bodies, and all directed with especial regard to a happy eternity." Here is a noble model for female education,—the education, it must be remembered, of the daughters of the poor. If they were all brought up in this manner, what a regeneration would take place in society. Our good Father has a particular care of their temporal welfare. In a petition which he presented at Rome, to obtain the canonical recognition of his religious, he writes: "that it has been a subject of remark and admiration that the children who pass under their care undergo a wonderful reformation. It is seen that in a short time they learn, without much trouble, manual occupations, especially the poorer sort, who were before ignorant of any thing by which they might earn their livelihood, but who now support themselves honourably, and even contribute to the means of their poor widowed mothers and their young brothers and sisters."

He thus makes manual labour occupy a large share in the education of the poor. They are likewise to be taught "the Catechism.....a love of virtue, of good works, and of Christian manners.....civility, and propriety of behaviour..... reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing and other feminine occupations, and whatever may be of use to those who are likely to have need of their

services."

Each of these points is made the subject of instruction, full of mildness and grandeur, of charming simplicity, and of consummate science. It is most admirable to see this great man descend to the most minute details of the charge of a class. His method, was, moreover, quite new. I doubt whether the germ of the invention attributed to the Venerable de la Salle,\* as well as another of a more recent date, may not be found in blessed Fourier's plan. The only system of teaching hitherto practised was that given by one master to all his scholars successively, whence there resulted absence of emulation, distaste for learning, little progress, and loss of time: since, in a class of thirty children, each child can receive but one lesson of eight or ten minutes a day, whilst the others are idle during the time he receives it. This defective system was the only one followed, and it is yet. at the present time, in more than seven thousand schools in France.

The mechanism of the class is as follows, according to Fourier's plan:—"Each division shall contain sixteen or eighteen scholars, who shall be ruled, instructed, and directed by a mistress. Each mistress shall arrange her scholars, placing them in pairs, not according to their age or station, but as to their knowledge, so that, by attending to the other's reading, they may take one another up, and thus strive piously for the mastery." And further, with regard to reading: "When a mistress gives a lesson she

<sup>\*</sup> Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.—

shall place the first pair on either side of her desk; the best scholar shall then read her lesson. while the other, listening, shall correct all the faults she may make.....The second shall then read in her turn, while the first listens and corrects her. If either suffer a fault to pass in the other without correction, it shall be accounted a fault for the one so missing." And again: "The mistress shall pronounce all the words in a loud voice, and the children shall repeat them after her.....They shall say them either in pairs, or in parties of five or six together." There is but a step from this system to the simultaneous method of teaching. The Venerable de la Salle wrote his rule in 1680. Had he not seen those of Fourier, printed in 1640? Surely he who made educational institutions his study knew the convent of the religious of the "good Father of Mattaincourt," at Rheims. The first idea of any new discovery is always buried somewhere, until some powerful agent causes it to spring up. This method of correcting one child by another had but to be generalised to form the mutual system of instruction.

These glimmerings of modern plans occurring two centuries ago are doubtless remarkable facts. Nor will the broad, methodical, and liberal manner of Fourier, in expounding religious questions, appear less striking. "The mistresses," says he, "shall explain the Catechism simply and clearly, without seeking any extraneous matter or subtle or far-fetched questions. They may, however, introduce anecdotes, taking care that they be true and selected with prudence."

His remarks on the conduct to be pursued by

the religious towards the Protestant children will be read with interest: "If any girl of this pre-tended reformed religion should be found among your pupils, treat her kindly and charitably; do not permit the other children to molest or taunt her. Be not hasty in asking her to renounce her errors, nor speak harshly of her religion, but, as occasions may offer, praise ours; and speaking in general terms to all your scholars, show how beautiful and reasonable are its holy precepts and practices. Particularly impress on their minds the fear of God, and that children owe the greatest respect and love to their parents..... A holy love of God, and obedience to His commandments, should also be assiduously inculcated. You will avoid offending or estranging these poor wanderers, and if they are diligent bestow due praise upon their labour and work, and, instead of religious pictures or rosaries, which are given to the Catholic children as prizes, bestow on them some gilt paper, a beautiful pen, or something of a kind that they will not disdain."\* In speaking of the exercises of piety proper to be taught the children, he recommends them "to choose the most enticing and easy forms, and such as are appropriate to their weakness, and never to force them, or tire them with exacting too much. To pay particular attention to the works of mercy, to the performance of which they should be frequently excited, or at least they should be often exercised in prayer to the Almighty for the necessities of others, in order that when their age and position may enable them they may

<sup>\*</sup> Letter written on the 27th of February, 1624.

succour the unfortunate in a more substantial manner." And wishing the children to pray "at the Angelus and other times and occasions of the day," he adds: "if it be possible and convenient, and their mothers permit it." Thus nothing was to be forced or overstrained, but on all occasions a sincere desire was to be shown to follow the wishes of the parents. He is especially anxious for them to excite generous and benevolent sentiments in the minds of their scholars. "They shall be instructed to bear in their hearts and show in their conduct a great love and reverence for their parents, to pay them the most implicit obedience, and to strive always to satisfy, comfort, and please them.....to love their grandparents and aunts and uncles, and pay them all respect. They shall show themselves affectionate and true sisters to their brothers and sisters.....and take care not to offend or despise any one of their companions, however poor or mean she may be. They shall love them all in God, and live together in good peace."

The following is a charming picture of the duties of a young woman. "Modesty and humility are bright ornaments in girls, and render them most pleasing, and are the greatest helps to preserve their purity.....Those who are grown up shall be warned to prepare themselves and be always ready to resist firmly the temptations which will arise from their own bodies, the world and the devil.....The mistresses will also give them instructions on the guard they must constantly put on their eyes, their movements, and their words.....and show them how to conduct themselves at church, in their homes, at

table, in their walks through the town, and in speaking and writing to their relations and friends. They shall be also strictly enjoined to keep their persons and clothes clean and neat. The mistresses will take care to observe every thing suited to the condition of each of their little scholars; they will also consult the desires and wishes of their parents, and beware of placing before them anything which is only proper for religious. They shall carefully instruct them to observe a great respect for one another, accompanied with charity, meekness, and Christian civility..."

The completeness of this system of education is remarkable, every thing that is necessary for the formation of women is observed, and, indeed, a superior style of education is followed than is generally considered necessary for the lower orders. His method tends directly to some useful purpose. "The children shall be taught to write receipts, and bills of goods, &c. The more advanced shall also be occasionally exercised in composition; they shall be made to write letters to their companions on various subjects. They shall be taught to speak and pronounce correctly the language of their province, yet without any affectation or ostentation."

The good Father overlooked nothing that was likely to concur in the realisation of his plans for female educational reform. In one of his letters dated 29th November, 1625, he writes: "Do you not think it advisable to wean the children from their profane songs by the Congregation singing to them the Psalms of David, to some easy and pleasing airs? I think this would be advantageous to all the people, for these little

ones (fillettes) growing up and becoming mothers may, in their turn, sing them to their children and others, and may thencefrom draw great consolation and beautiful instruction. I have a long time entertained the desire of hearing the women of Mattaincourt, in summer, while spinning, and on winter evenings by their warm firesides, and at all times, at their different occupations, singing some devout canticles instead of engaging in scandal, and other vain and foolish and even wicked conversation. For this purpose we have the faithful, intelligible, (as far such things can be) and approved translation of Philip Desportes. You can have a new edition, handsomely printed, for the express use of the Congregation. Think a little over this, and you will do well to communicate it to his lordship the bishop. How delightful the accomplishment of this idea seems to me!" I know not whether this design was carried out; it appears to have been favourably received, for Fourier writes in January, 1626, thus: "It seems to me, in reading what you have written upon the Psalms, that you imagine that I have translated them, and wish them to be printed from my own manuscript. Truly you are joking.....It was Father Desportes' version I spoke of, and which I have heard much praised by several great minds. I am glad to hear, and thank God, that the bishop approves of this devotion." He enters with minute detail into the subject of manual employments. "The scholars who wish to learn to work shall be taught to sew, to make lace," (the principal employment of the women in that province), and all other kinds of needlework.

The out-door pupils shall be instructed in such common work as may be useful to them. They need not be taught rare or expensive work. The work and the lessons should be so divided as to relieve one another, paying particular attention that the children of the poor or of a better condition, who desire to get through much work in order to sell it, shall be urged to make great diligence and to lose no time. The religious will watch carefully over their young charge, and repress every rising sign of sloth, negligence, or disgust at work among them. He ordered a table of the several duties of the scholars to be drawn up. The religious were frequently to call their attention to this card, and say to them: "Most dear children and good scholars of the Mother of God, in keeping these regulations you will learn well in this school, and being blessed by God, and agreeable to heaven and earth, you will become useful to your fathers and mothers, and, in faithfully discharging your duties, you will be happy both in this world and in the next."

On their part the mistresses are instructed "not

On their part the mistresses are instructed "not to show any signs of anger, impatience, or disdain, or to be harsh, or vexed with those who find a difficulty in learning. They must not call them stupid, foolish, or bad girls, or speak to them crossly, or strike them, or push them roughly, but rather act patiently and mildly with them, making excuses for them, and encouraging them to perseverance......If the children enter or quit the school disorderly, as children will do sometimes, they shall not be scolded or threatened......and if any immodesty should be perceived, the mistress shall seek some occasion

of quietly reproving the offender at her lesson. No words of contempt, raillery, or mockery shall pass between them, or against others, whether they be present or absent, nor shall they be more familiar with, or partial to some than they are to others." I must continue my quotations from this beautiful chapter of the good Father's rules. Fourier fears not to overcharge his religious; at the same time, the most moving examples and elevated ideas are called forth to inspire the sisters with a love for their duties. Nor are they indifferently selected for the care of the children's education. "Mother Superior will be careful in her choice of sisters who appear the most fitted, and best disposed for this charge. She will select those who are most healthy and cheerful, who have the best constitutions, are courageous and obedient, and have sufficient zeal to bear the fatigue of this holy work. They should also be well tried in humility, modesty, patience, and obedience, being laborious, discreet, devout, and fervent; in a word, good religious and true daughters of the Blessed Virgin ..... Being elected, they will return their humble thanks to the Almighty for having deigned to employ them in this work, which is nearly allied to that of the good angels of these girls, and which will be amply repaid from the treasury of heaven. They will thenceforward take courage and fear nothing, but steadfastly and betimes devote themselves to study, work, diligence, and, above all, to prayer, for the happy success of their humble labours.....

He then crowns his work with announcing the great and new principle of gratuitous education.

"In order that our Lord may be their only paymaster ..... and to give every facility to the poorest children as well as to the rich, they shall teach gratuitously—purely for the love of God, and shall neither ask or accept of any thing either from the scholars or their parents, or from others in their name." And this devotedness to the instruction of the poor he guards with precautions as a delicate and fragile object. "In order to keep themselves particularly clear from all suspicion on this subject, they will receive no present from any of these persons under whatever pretext it may be offered, even though the donor should declare that they do not give it on account of the scholars..... They will not ask the children or their friends for any thing towards the purchase of brooms for cleaning the schoolrooms, for making benches or desks or mending broken windows.....all this must be done at the expense of the community."

The education of the poor, thus defined, is the inalienable patrimony of the Congregation: "All the convents of the Congregation shall be obliged for ever to maintain schools for the instruction of poor girls, to esteem and cherish it as the essential part of their holy institute, which they must never abandon.....If from any unforeseen event as war, plague, or some other grave cause, it shall be deemed absolutely necessary to interrupt the course of instruction in any part, the danger having passed, it shall be immediately resumed.....The religious alone shall be employed for this purpose, and their place shall never be supplied by lay sisters, servants, or any

other women whatever."

This work forms the subject of a fourth vow, which is placed on the same footing as the three ordinary vows of religion. On the day of her profession, the religious having vowed "perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience," adds, that she will never consent to the instruction of young girls being abandoned. I have lately heard this vow pronounced, in a firm but low voice, by a young lady who had possessed all the riches and graces which the world esteem. She thus consecrated herself with all her soul to these poor little ones. But the charm of the contrast, and the beauty of the sacrifice, were not the only ideas which struck me. This vow, two centuries old, always being renewed and never to cease, appeared truly sublime. I thought of a recent decree of our legislative assembly; I admired the initiatory and enduring spirit of religion, and, notwithstanding the immense resources of public instruction, this provident vow of the good Father appeared to me not to be thought little of. In spite of revolutions, of neglect, and error, as long as a daughter of Fourier survives will the bread of knowledge be dispensed to woman.

My first intention in opening the Book of Constitutions was to confine my attention to that portion of it relating to instruction. But when at first, from distraction, I turned to the other parts, I could not resist the strong feeling I had to read the whole volume. There are few works so interesting, and although dry and minute details will be found,\* yet the interior of

<sup>\*</sup> The venerable author says himself of his Constitutions: "They are simple, clear, and intelligible, rather diffuse in

a cloistered and hidden life so unknown to the world; the organization of this distinct kingdom, with its peculiar life; that confidence and love on which is founded a direction ever tending to the perfectioning of the soul; these are uncommon subjects of observation. Several chapters in which the defects of character, and the good and evil inclinations in novices are analysed, in a masterly style, show a profound knowledge of the human heart, and great ability in its direction. Others such as the "portrait of the superioress—the mother of mercy and of consolation," portray a charming picture of the union of the Sisters which breathes a sweet air of happiness and peace. There are many pleasing features in the style of the Constitutions; and we sometimes meet with flights of the imagination worthy of St. Francis of Sales. Like him, the good Fourier, had the art of infusing into all he wrote a spiritual and poetic feeling. The least duties of the house are raised in dignity, and associated with some pious allusion. Thus "the religious having the care of the garden, can imagine her maiden body and soul to be an enclosed garden well pleasing to heaven, and which, in every season, brings forth all kinds of good fruit...she will thus employ her skill and industry to cultivate and adorn the garden, so as to render it an agreeable place of recreation for the servants of God....She will take care to reserve a portion for the production of beautiful and sweet-smelling

some parts, and often descending to remarks which may be thought of little consequence, without attention to which, however, strict discipline can hardly be preserved." flowers, for the use of the Church and the infirmary." He is very fond of metaphors and images. He says: "The Congregation will choose from the treasures which are contained in the Catechism some select pieces, and make of them, as it were, a sanctuary, or cabinet, filled with large pearls of inestimable value, with bracelets and earrings of gold, and other exquisite ornaments, to enrich the scholars and adorn them like princesses and young ladies of rank.....The precious stones and jewels will be certain acts of devotion and other good practises in honour of our Lord." "Chastity" he calls "the crown of angels and their glory. Those virgins dedicated to God, those saintly spouses of the Holy Ghost, are true angels upon earth. Let us guard with most jealous care their virgin hearts and doves' eves."

It is difficult to quit this graceful and flowery path, but I must desist. Enough has already been given to enable my readers to judge of the blessed Fourier's rule, as great in design as it is charming in form. We must not forget that it is not merely a philosophical or literary work, on the library shelf, but a living reality, a code perpetually practised, under which so many still

live and die happily.\*

<sup>\*</sup> There are thirty houses of the Congregation (three of which are in Paris) in France and Germany.





## BLESSED PETER FOURIER.

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## CHAPTER V,

HE good Father, in the midst of the success of his new and flourishing family, often turned his thoughts towards that desolate house to which his early vows attached him. The remembrance of Chaumousey filled his soul with sadness; the opprobrium which had fallen on his habit wrung from him tears of shame and of pity, and, doubtless, excited strong desires in his mind. Not, indeed, that he then thought of reforming the Canons, so improperly at that time called Regular. Had he entertained this project and judged himself able to execute it, he certainly would not have succeeded. The first condition required for success in religious works, is a distrust in one's own strength. Besides, man is powerless in changing the heart of his fellow men. Of this the history of monastic reforms in the 17th century affords incontestible proof. Kings and princes of the Church, with all the prestige of power and talent, fail in their efforts; though they only attempt a partial amelioration in relaxing the rule to render it more practicable. A saint appears, and in an instant thousands return to the primitive severity of discipline. This profound mystery is readily unravelled by the Christian, while it defies the explanation of the rationalist.

It may be well in this place to describe the position of the religious orders at this epoch. Dom Calmet\* speaks of them in terms of great severity, and of the degraded state into which many houses had fallen. A single fact will show what kind of men formed their inmates. The Cardinal of Lorraine, having been commissioned by the Holy See to effect the reform of that duchy, signified his intention of acting in his capacity of Abbot of St. Mihiel. The monks, hearing of the approach of the Apostolic Commissaries, fortified themselves behind their embattled walls and threatened to fire if they advanced. However, the Cardinal was not to be daunted. To speak only of the Regular Canons, he assembled the heads of all their houses on the 7th of July, 1595, and opened the sitting in an eloquent harangue. "They were so dazzled by the brilliancy of this scarlet + (robed priest), which spoke to them in so reasonable a manner, that they made some stir, feigned a desire of drawing up new constitutions and promised wonders. There remained but one difficulty -that of putting these fine words into execution. Another attempt was made in 1604. An abbot was selected to make the inspection of the monasteries. He, however, neglected to reform himself: "The devil, seeing him come to attack him, in a beautiful carriage and with a long train

<sup>·</sup> Hist. de Lorraine.

<sup>+</sup> Alluding to the colour of the Cardinal's dress .- Trans.

<sup>1</sup> Bédel. Vie du Trés Rev. Père Fourier.

of pages and servants, felt so confident of his position that he did not even deign to stir a foot."\* Matters, therefore, went on as before, and whilst the Benedictines had possessed their admirable reform of St. Vanne, the canons continued to live in a state of disorder, the more striking from the contrast. The Bishop of Toul, (Mgr. des Porcelets de Maillane), a great prelate and one equal to the times, saw well that another Didier de la Cour was wanted. His eyes fell naturally on the good Curé of Mattaincourt, and he obtained from Rome, in 1621, a brief, naming Fourier Visitor-general of the Abbeys of Lorraine, with full power of redressing abuses, of reestablishing ancient discipline, and of punishing the guilty. † Our Father thus became, in spite of himself, engaged in this work. His bishop urgently pressed him to commence without delay. "In the name of God, Sir," he writes to Fourier on the 16th of May, 1622: " let it please you to come instantly to our assistance.....Pray make no delay for I can wait no longer. Come, and let us commence immediately."

An appeal was made to all the religious, but four alone attended to the summons. To these were added two students of the university, and fully convinced that they must not look for success on the strength of the means employed, did

<sup>\*</sup> Bédel.

<sup>†</sup> At the same time Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld invited the Abbé Fourier to come and establish the reform of his Abbey of St. Genevieve, in Paris. He could not accept this proposal. The reform was afterwards brought about by Father Faure, in the Regular Canons of France, who constitute a distinct Congregation.

our blessed Peter and his companions enter the retreat which was to prepare them for their warfare. All the houses of their order shut their doors against them. They were, however, received into the Abbey of St. Mary Major, of Pont-à-Mousson, belonging to the Premonstratensians,\* which order had lately been reformed by Servais Lairuel. Nor did Didier de la Cour refuse his sympathetic aid to our holy Father, but often did pious communications pass between him and the cloister of St. Vanne. † Thus again were the three friends of youth united in after life, to assist one in his efforts to bring about what the other two had happily accomplished.

The little exiled colony exercised themselves

in prayer and study. Their chief, surrounded by his youthful confrères, inspired them with fervour, and seemed to have renewed his youth. His heart overflowed with joy. "It is a great subject for which to praise God," he writes, "and to hope for great things from Him through this small but most holy regiment, to see them so united, so virtuous, so resigned, and so full of

joy and of charity."

The bishop took the greatest interest in their labours, and he often escaped from his palace in order to spend some days quietly with them. He went to find repose and to join them in their exercises, which he shared even as regards the humblest duties, several times sweeping

+ Celebrated Benedictine Abbey at Verdun, in Lorraine. -Trans.

<sup>\*</sup> So called from the valley of Premonté, in the forest of Coucy, where their first house was situated.—Trans.

their cells with his own twice consecrated hands. Our blessed Father, now nearly a sexagenarian, entered into all the fatigues of the noviciate, and nothing could be more charming than the simplicity which appeared in his conduct. He pretended to have no hand in the business in which he was the prime mover; he most naively considered himself as nothing, and referred all to his bishop. "I cannot tell you," he writes, "how much care and earnestness, what time, watching, and money, the Bishop of Toul devotes to this work. At present this is the sole object of his mind. He wishes me to set about it immediately, although I am sure I know not of what possible use I am or can be. But he is my bishop, my superior, and my benefactor; I am his priest, his subject, his vicar, and his religious, and I therefore am bound to yield him all obedience."

Some of his nuns having written to beg of him to come to them, he thus answered them: "I serve no purpose here but to eat the bread of these good religious, and give them but sorry edification, so that one of these days they will send me away as a worthless idler, and then I shall have plenty of time to see you." And to others: "My only business here is in the grace of God, but I hope that I shall be driven hence towards Easter, when they will have had enough of me, since I do no good, and only deceive the bishop, who expected from me much more than he has found, as I told him would be the case." The prelate paid little attention to his prophecy, but kept him for four years, by which time the religious of every house in Lorraine had adopted the reform, and pronounced the

vows which bound them to the new Congregation. Fourier, fearing lest he should be elected general, delayed renewing his until a religious, thirty years old, who gave signs of a long life, had been appointed. But we shall see that heaven decreed otherwise, in order to place him at the head of the order, the restoration of which

he had so happily completed.

I can only give a passing glance at the splendid Constitutions which he gave the religious, and of which Urban VIII. said: "If I knew a canon who strictly observed this rule, I would canonize him before his death." In effect, it contains the whole evangelical perfection, as defined by the Scriptures and the Fathers. The same master mind is recognised in them as in the Constitutions for his nuns, the same knowledge of hearts, and, with a more manly tone, an equal unction of charity; the same spirit of organisation and foresight ever occupied with the new wants of the times, and a strong tendency to direct all to the practical utility of society.

The Institute of Regular Canons allows of the exercise of the pastoral ministry and of preaching. Its reformer wished to add a third obligation, and one of more universal application; his idea was to give this ancient order the charge of the instruction of youth. The education of the poor, by the religious orders, was the grand object of his heart. Having realised one division of the subject, the present seemed a favourable opportunity for renewing the other at first so unsuccessful. The reader has not forgot his first attempts at Mattaincourt, when his hopes were frustrated by the inconstancy of his subjects.

But now "seeing the novices so ardently burning with the desire of doing good, he hesitated not to lay before them his wishes and plans which were not merely to combat for the reform of certain houses, scattered here and there over the country, but to draw a little world out of the deluge of spiritual evil ..... and particularly to make war on ignorance, teaching, gratuitously, boys, as the nuns taught the girls.....Without wishing to reap other people's harvest, he only desired to glean what they had left; to throw the schools open to rich and poor boys, as soon as they had come to the use of reason; to teach them reading, writing, and sufficient Latin to enable them to enter the colleges ...... If any of the students, not wishing to make this course but knowing reading and writing, desired to enter the world, they should be asked, as well as their parents, what trade they intended to follow, and then instruction was to be given them for some months in such things as might be most useful to enable them to follow it, and to improve their temporal and spiritual life."\*

It was the counterpart of the nuns' mission. The deputation which our saint sent to Rome in 1627, to obtain their recognition, were charged to ask the same favour for the Canons. We see in the instructions which he gave them how dear

<sup>\*</sup> Bédel. The blessed Fourier also projected the establishment of a seminary, as we learn from the same author: "I have heard him speak of his intention of asking the bishops not to allow any person to enter upon the care of souls, before he presented an attestation from one of our houses, declaring him to be versed in pastoral functions and in the direction of souls."

the design was to his heart. "Regarding our wished-for schools, it will be well to show that as the boys who do not wish to learn Latin, and others before they enter college, have no religious body to take charge of them, at least in this part, it seems that it is as it were a kind of vacant benefice in the Church of God. Let us, there-

fore, humbly petition for it."

He devised an ingenious method of gaining the Pope's goodwill towards his proposition. "Since our holy Father is fond of poetry, it seems to me that it would be well to write a few pretty lines for a new year's gift, introducing the little children of Lorraine, beyond the mountains, in two groups, boys and girls, wishing him a 'Happy new year,' and in the background place some pious men and women who, retired from the world and freed from the slavery of marriage, devote themselves to the voluntary, gratuitous, and constant instruction of these children in the fear of God."

But having granted this boon, as we have seen, to religious women, Rome thought proper to refuse the vacant benefice (as Fourier beautifully expressed it) to the Canons. It was not thought a sufficiently dignified office for priests. Thus the Brothers of the Christian doctrine, to whom the charge of the instruction of youth was confided a century later, by a bull of Benedict XIII., in 1724, were not allowed to aspire to the priestly order.

Urban VIII., however, confirmed by a bull, dated the Feast of St. Augustine, 1628, the reform in Lorraine of the Regular Canons, under the title of *Congregation of our Saviour*, like unto that of our Lady, as are the names of Brother and Sister.

The Canons did not, however, entirely abandon their educational scheme. They had several colleges which were according to the testimony of Dom Calmet, "sources of great reputation to them in all the country for their great skill in teaching the humanities." He adds, that they had erected in the city of Metz, an academy from which they acquired great honour.\* The Congregation numbered many men of great talent among their members. Fourier, in this as well as his former work, had found several choice minds, who furnished him with the resources of talent united to the power of sanctity.

A young man, who was uncertain about his vocation, met with the good Father by chance, and hearing him discourse about God, fell on his knees and abandoned himself to his direction. He presented himself as a postulant at the noviciate of the order, but would only enter on condition of being allowed to remain a lay brother all his life. At the end of five years this young man was Father Guinet, the first general of the Congregation. "It seemed," says Bédel, in speaking of him, "as if he had commenced his life with old age, as well by the shortness of his career as by the solid virtues which he practised at an age of which inconstancy is the general characteristic." During his noviciate the only fault to be reproved in him was an excess of fervour, and the only difficulty was to restrain him in his penitential desires. Our Father wrote to his superiors urging them "to correct his little obstinacies in austerities

<sup>\*</sup> Dom Calmet, in the Preface to the Bibl: Lorraine.

and external penance. Would it not be well," says he, "to give him roast meat and good wine for some days until he takes it willingly? and tell him, that unless he shows greater obedience in these matters he will not be allowed to make

his profession." (30th July, 1625.)

During his sojourn at Rome, on the mission just noticed, he took occasion to increase his fasts to such an extent that his companions were obliged to write to a Jesuit who was his confessor. "This religious ordered him to roast some meat the next day, and while Father Guinet was out engaged in his business this prudent confessor went to his house, and, finding the meat cooking, he wrote on a paper: 'The Rev. Father Guinet is permitted to distribute this meat among the poor, and to live in his accustomed way, having a care not to exceed his judgment and holy obedience.' He, after this, continued his usual austerities, and fortified by his fasts triumphed over every difficulty, obtained admission to the pope, at whose knees he prostrated himself for the space of two hours; and making deeper impression by his poverty, his well-worn habit, the modesty of his eyes, and the prudence of his words, than he had been able to do through the intervention of more influential persons, he obtained from his holiness all that he wished."\*

On his return, being elected general, he showed a rare capacity and a paternal tenderness, retaining, however, the same warm zeal which finally brought him to his end. Pestilence raged at Pont-à-Mousson. Our Father

begged him to retire from the monastery, making it a case of conscience, for him to prefer his family who stood in danger of losing their head, to a people well supplied with pastors. "There is," said he, "but one Father Guinet, and one general of the Congregation of our Saviour, in the whole world." The devoted religious heeded not his entreaties, and fell a victim to his charity on Good Friday, 1632. The malady attacked him as he was confessing the dying. "Having remarked the hour, he said to the infirmarian: 'This is the time at which they began to crucify my Master; it is time to die. At these words, reclining his head on the board of the bedside. as on the wood of the cross, he expired in the thirty-second year of his age."\*

Fourier was doubly afflicted at this cruel but glorious death. Fancying, that by the election of so young a man, he should escape an elevation he feared, he had just pronounced his vows. Now all his hopes were destroyed. His correspondence at this period, bears witness to his anxiety at the inevitable approach of his election. In a letter to his nuns, he writes: "I see them all prepared to give their votes in a manner which is against my most ardent wishes. This grieves me deeply. You must work a miracle and a great one too, to prevent the evil I foresee."..... Father Bédel, an eye-witness, relates the anguish it gave the new general to receive the homage of the religious who kissed his hand.

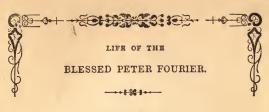
A new charge, sufficient of itself to absorb any man's time and attention, laid a heavy weight

upon his already well-laden and aged shoulders. The care of his parish, and of the Congregation of our Lady, of which he was the sole director, well occupied his indefatigable activity. The interest of so many required continual travel, and overwhelming correspondence. Every one wished to see him and to keep him. His great difficulty was to devote an equal portion of his time to each of his children. The first in his affection-his parishioners, at Mattaincourt, had always the preference. "I have tried to steal," he writes, "two or three days from this octave. but in vain. I could not do so for the world. I must give them entirely to my parishioners. Next Sunday is the day fixed, in ancient times, for this parish to elect a churchwarden, a schoolmaster, a justice of the peace, and an elder, to summon and fine bad debtors who are very numerous. The creation of these officers rests with the parish priest, and I cannot be absent without great danger of committing a serious wrong, and throwing my parish into confusion. I once saw how much my absence cost them on a former occasion-how was the poor little bark tossed, and nearly overwhelmed in a sea of lawsuits, expenses, and other difficulties!".....He also writes to other religious as follows: "I praise your desire for me to go to St. Nicolas', but this poor earth (his parish) has been at least indifferently ploughed and sown since Advent, and it surely is not fitting that, when the harvest is ready and waits but the reaper's sickle, the wretched labourer who is fed and paid for this work should abandon it! What would the Lord of the harvest say? What would these poor people, so weak and wavering and easily tired of their devotions, say, when they cannot be attended to, at their own hour and season?"

It is, indeed, easy to perceive that parochial duties form his most cherished and constant "One must be a parish priest," occupation. says he, "to understand the affection I bear to my parishioners—the pain I suffer at seeing them afflicted, and how I deserve to be excused from looking after other affairs, or writing to people who are, or at least ought to be perfect, when I see my poor people unjustly used, and in danger of losing soul and body. I had resolved not to write a line until this suit between our people and the citizens of Mirecourt had been settled, for my head is so full of it that I cannot permit any other affair to have any hold on my mind "\*

\* This letter was written 16th January, 1620; the suit he speaks of was occasioned by a dispute with the people of Mirecourt, who wished to prevent their neighbours of Mattaincourt from purchasing their corn at the market, until a certain tax had been levied on it. Fourier anxiously sought to find out whether this was justifiable or not.





## CHAPTER VI.

T is now time for us to speak of the diocesan visitation, which our Father undertook at the command of his bishop, and of his missions against Protestantism, and in the Vosges. These mountains were inhabited by a people, who were half savages, and buried in the grossest ignorance and superstition, retained from pagan times. Fourier went among them with apostolic zeal, preaching in the woods and on the declivities of mountains, where he attracted the inhabitants by the charming simplicity of his discourses. A Jesuit, who accompanied him, thus wrote of the venerable Father: "It is now more than thirty-two years since I was joined with him in the mission to the Vosges. .....He always travelled on foot, roughly clad, with his breviary under his arm, and poor as he was, not having the means of living as an humble priest, he paid all the expenses of the journey, and never would receive any thing from the people. He slept either on the ground, or on a bench, as was his custom at home. On another journey I made with him, to visit Mgr. de Maillane, Bishop of Toul, he endured great hardships without the least complaint. His greatest delight was to labour for the salvation of souls, and our conversation always turned upon the means

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of gaining them to God, and of effecting a reformation of manners."

These evangelical progresses remind one of the early labours of St. Francis of Sales, in the Chablais. Our holy missioner wished to establish a nursery of apostolic men in the Vosges, to assure the permanency of the mission. His friend, M. Virion, envoy of the Duke of Lorraine at the Holy See, provided the funds necessary for its first establishment. In a letter dated from Rome, on the 14th February, 1626, he says: "I leave to your prudence, Reverend Father, the choice of the locality of this new sanctuary. It appears to me that it could not be more appropriately placed than in the heart of these mountains, so that these new apostles may readily disperse themselves among the people, and be easily accessible to them in their troubles and difficulties ..... I will provide chalices, vestments, and altar furniture..... will have the document of the foundation drawn up, with the grace of God, and sent to you in order to settle the matter. Take courage, then, Reverend Father, and let us set about the work.".....

The blessed Father selected for the site of the house the valley of Tholy, a vast crevice like the dried up bed of a torrent between high mountains covered with forests. A church was soon raised, by its side—a large handsome erection sprung up, which was tenanted by the Canons of the Congregation of our Saviour, till the time of the first French Revolution. It is to this establishment that the Vosges owes the faith which so remarkably distinguishes it. The author of an anonymous life of the blessed Peter Fourier,

written in 1746, says: "that religion revived, and the piety of the early Christians was renewed, and still shines forth brightly at the present day. It is delightful to see these poor folks well instructed, bound together in their families by the closest bonds of union and peace, and most assiduous in their attendance at the offices of the Church.....Of these facts I have

been an eye-witness for several years."

I am able, a century later, to confirm the statements of this author. I have frequently admired the zeal of these good mountaineers, who, in parishes of some leagues in extent, come regularly every Sunday to hear God's word, the only means they have of sustaining their moral life. I have watched whole troops of them, from the missionary house, now the presbytery at Tholy, and at such times fancy carried me back to the time when the good Father evangelized these people, and drew them out of the

double abyss of superstition and heresy.

Protestantism could never fix its throne in Lorraine. The race from which the family of the Guises sprang was Catholic at heart. It was near Nancy that, in 1584, the league was formed, and Charles III., during ten years, made enormous sacrifices of men and gold to support it. Earlier, the pious Duke Anthony had saved France from a new invasion of barbarians. A formidable body of German peasants had risen at the voice of Luther. Forty thousand rebels, without counting the women and children who followed in the train of these fanatics, passed the Rhine, and prepared to cross the mountains. The duke hastened to meet them, defeated them

in two engagements in the plains of Alsatia, and forced them to retrace their steps. He was desired to wait three days, according to military usage, for the deputation of the princes, who were approaching to thank him for his services; but he answered that "his only object in undertaking this war was to re-establish religion, and that as God had graciously granted him the victory, the only wish he had was, that the princes and lords would put the finish to what he had begun."\* The firmness of his successors, in like manner stayed the progress of heresy, which sur-rounded the frontiers of Lorraine on all sides. Several edicts were published forbidding the exercise of Protestantism, but those who wished to embrace that system were allowed a year to sell their property and to leave the country. This decided policy prevented the misfortunes which internal division invariably cause, and removed from the country all germs of trouble. But there was an institution which tended more than all the ordinances of the princes to maintain the integrity of faith, this was the University of Pont-à-Mousson, founded on the 15th December, 1572, which, with the superior clergy, exercised a noble influence in the country. I doubt whether there could have been found elsewhere, at this epoch, an equal number of eminent prelates in so confined an extent of country. At Treves, John of Issembourg, John of Leyen, and James of Eltz, brought about, by word and example, an ecclesiastical reform and the instruction of the people. The first of these begged his assembled

<sup>\*</sup> Dom Calmet " Hist. de Lorraine," t. II.

clergy to tell him what they found defective in his mode of administration, but they declared that there was no fault to be found. Cardinal de Vaudémont, consecrated a bishop at twentyone years of age, strongly resembled St. Charles Borromeo; his episcopal palace was a perfect cloister. At Verdun lived the learned Psaume, well known for the part he took in the Council of Trent. Prince Erric, of Lorraine, feeling confined in his diocese, implored the pope to employ him in the war against the Turks, that he might shed his blood for the faith, in emulation of his brothers of Mercœur and Chaligny. They sought to persuade him that there were infidels enough at home; he then petitioned and obtained leave to join the Capucins, and a premature death alone prevented him from fulfilling his purpose. Prince Charles of Lorraine, his successor, entered the order of Jesus, and lived as a simple religious, forgetful of what he had been in the Church, and in the world. His mother being a widow, for the second time, at the age of twenty-seven, having seen her children settled, took the religious habit of the Sepulcrians; and the Princess of Ligne, one of her daughters, entered the order of the Capucines.

Under such bishops, and many others whom I cannot here mention,\* religious spirit received a wonderful impulse. Literature was again revived with honour; seminaries were founded; discipline was re-established; and religious orders reformed; new orders were instituted, and the first house of refuge, the model of the asylums

<sup>\*</sup> See Dom Calmet, Vol. III. p. 1, 170, 739, & 782.

of the Good Shepherd was opened at Nancy.\* The court also presented the rare spectacle of sanctity on the throne. Duke Henry whom we have seen so devoted to Mother Alice, was a good have seen so devoted to Mother Alice, was a good Christian, a wise legislator, and a magnificent prince. He bore the name of "Mary," as his device on the pommel of his sword; fasted rigorously, and disciplined himself, which conduct did not, however, prevent him from gaining many battles. All the princes of Lorraine, at this period, were distinguished for their love of religion. If Dom Calmet's patriotism has not led him into pious exaggerations, it must be allowed that no royal house presents such a succession of noble characters, and we can readily cession of noble characters, and we can readily conceive the pacific power of these dukes, as well as the still unforgotten affection of their subjects. The nobility were also devoted to the Church, and the world was ennobled by pious women, who took active parts in all good works, as we see in the correspondence of our holy Father.

The only places in Lorraine which were troubled

by the outbreaks of heretical frenzy, were the cities of Metz, Toul, and Verdun. In the first of these alone, could Protestantism gain a footing; the two others it disgraced by some scandals, after which it was heard of no more.

The danger was greater in the small principalities bordering on Alsatia. The Rhingraves of Fénétrange, the Count of Bitche and of Salm, friends of Coligny, had introduced Calvinism

<sup>\*</sup> It was proposed, as we see by one of Fourier's letters, to confide this house to the care of the Congregation of our Lady.

into their domains, whence it reached the territory of Lorraine. The flame threatened to spread itself. The severity of the laws, the preaching of missionaries, an apostolic vicariate erected for that purpose, had done nothing to extinguish it. Philip de Salm himself, having abjured his errors, laboured hard to undo his father's work, with little effect. After thirty years spent in vain efforts, recourse was again had to the good Father of Mattaincourt, and an order from his bishop brought him, in 1625, to undertake this new enterprise. Hitherto controversy had been the sole means employed, henceforward the work was done by his favourite arms, of example and

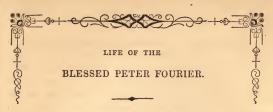
of charity.

"After having fortified the Catholics," says Father Bédel, "by sermons and frequent exhortations, his prayers, tears and good example, were devoted to the sectaries of Calvin ... So that notwithstanding their great diversity of opinion in religious affairs, they uniformly paid him great respect, and were very fond of him; while he, on his part, never rebuked them...He never reproached them with invectives or insults, nor even called them heretics as this name enraged them, but he spoke of them simply as 'strangers.' Seeing them one day returning from their meeting in great numbers, he suddenly stopped and began to cry so bitterly, that one of the leading men of the town accosting him, asked him if he were ill or in any necessity, and kindly placed his house and services at his disposal. Fourier, thanking him, said: "I weep at seeing these poor strangers so sadly deceived, and at the thought of the pains these good citizens are taking to gain hell."

Our blessed Father established himself at Badonviller, the capital of the county of Salm, in a district belonging to Lorraine. He afterwards ventured on the opposite shore, and began to preach in the streets, being often insulted and even beaten, but always remaining calm and benevolent. Accompanied by two Jesuits, he preached in all the neighbouring villages. Six months after his arrival, the Protestant place of worship was dedicated to the Almighty in honour of the Blessed Virgin, the Church property was restored, the priests recalled to their Churches and schools founded for both sexes. "These beginnings have with God's aid made such progress, that the doctrines of Calvin are now entirely banished from the soil, and his race extinct in all this country. So complete was the success of his mission that the Jesuit Father, who had recommended the princess to seek the aid of our Father, used to say, that he considered it the best thing he had done in his life."\*

\* Bédel.





## CHAPTER VIL\*

HIS great victory was the last triumph of the blessed Fourier; he now sank with his country under the anger of Richelieu. Lorraine had given umbrage to this great minister. It was, in fact, admirably disposed to form at the same time the hotbed of opposition to his power, and the greatest impediment in the way of his policy. Heir to the liberal sentiments which were attached to the league, the Duke of Lorraine naturally acquired in France the sympathy of those who hated the despotism of the cardinal. From the tyranny of petty citizens who, at this time, began to domineer every where, the spirit of independence took refuge with the nobles. As Montmorency was in the interior, the unfortunate head of resistance, so it could not find a more natural external chief than the Duke of Lorraine, the most French of foreign princes, and the only living representative of the men who first dared to speak to their king with uncovered heads. As was natural, he was the friend of the Duke of Orleans, in whom the French opposition sought a leader, and in fine, the Catho-

<sup>\*</sup> If read in communities, the first portion of this chapter to page 90 being merely historical, may be omitted.—

Trans.

lic traditions of his family led him naturally to seek an alliance with the house of Austria, and to oppose Protestantism, to which the cardinal had allied himself in Germany, at the same time that he crushed it at home. Historians of the reign of Louis XIII., writing with a central view, have not given sufficient importance to Lorraine. They treat it as an impertinent rebel, as if it were already the future French province,\* with its three departmental divisions. Its position, and the real cause of its attitude of hostility, have been quite overlooked. Richelieu, however, understood this well, and found the little province on the frontiers a great difficulty in his way. Thus, in the outset of his government, do we see him endeavouring not indeed to incorporate it with the kingdom, (the cardinals policy did not yet tend to conquest,) but to ruin and to weaken it, so as to have it ready at hand for any contingency. He began to call in question its sovereignty, and to attach it to Paris by the bond of vassalage. † An opportunity only was wanted to put these principles into execution. Lorraine, unfortunately, soon furnished an occasion which exceeded the hopes of her greatest enemy.

After a long line of pacific sovereigns, the ducal crown was placed on the head of a young prince of an adventurous and warlike disposition. Charles the IVth, would have been a worthy hero of the middle ages, but his life being cast two

<sup>\*</sup> Lorraine was not united to France till the reign of Louis XV., about 1740.—Trans.

<sup>† &</sup>quot;Lorraine was a fief of the ancient Counts of Champagne, to whom the king succeeded. It was to serve as the rampart of France against Germany, the Rhine being the former boundary of France from Germany."....

centuries too late, he was, in spite of his military genius and his noble qualities, but a sorry knight, a new Don Quixote, who spoilt his destiny and lost his fine position. He could not, as I said before, cease to be the enemy of France, whilst supporting the cause of the malcontents; but he formed an unfortunate opposition without helping any party. To Richelieu's skill he opposed the freaks of an inconsiderate warmth; at such times as he should have availed himself of the aid of diplomacy, he committed a deplorable mistake in using his sword. Advancing too far not be noticed, but not far enough to succeed, his mission seemed to be expressly undertaken to afford an appearance of right, to the views of the first minister. The latter hovered over his victim with the enduring avidity of the bird of prey. He allowed the rash prince to compromise himself deeply, to undervalue himself with England, and to give his sister in marriage to the Duke of Orleans, to violate treaties, and raise troops; then, as if he had not sufficiently implicated himself, the minister, in order as it were to give a motive for the punishment to follow, had recourse to a measure which seemed to belong to other times. The duke was summoned to appear, and pay fealty and homage to the king for that portion of the duchy of Bar, which, though joining his territories, belonged to the crown of France. Failing to observe this injunction, the parliament of Paris issued orders to seize the province. The king and cardinal himself immediately set out at the head of an army, which was marched upon Lorraine. Charles, parleyed, and offered

to submit, and he, who knew not repose when it was fitting to be at rest, was unable to act a vigorous part now that it had become necessary. What follows partakes more of the character of romance than of history. In vain to appease Richelieu, did Francis, Cardinal of Lorraine, (who was not in holy orders,) solicit the hand of his niece, Madame de Combalet; the town of Nancy was invested. Charles, at the termination of a treaty, had the chivalrous imprudence to visit the king at the camp, and was retained there a prisoner, and obliged to send word to the governor to throw open the city gates. He re-entered his capital in the royal suite, but soon contrived to escape, and abdicated in favour of his brother Francis. The cardinal, to prevent all contest of his rights, took, and accomplished in the space of one night, the resolution of marrying his cousin, the Princess Claudia, in whom were vested the female rights to the crown of Lorraine. Both were arrested the next morning, and conducted under a strong escort to Nancy, whence they contrived to escape from the palace in which they were confined—the duke in the disguise of a porter, and the princess in the dress of a page. At the city gates they changed their dresses for those of charcoal sellers, and passing the guards with baskets on their backs, they reached a wood where horses and attendants awaited them. The Princess of Phaltzbourg also cleared the gates, concealed in the cart of a pretended sick man, who being accustomed to make a daily pilgrimage outside the town, was allowed to pass unexamined. As to the unfortunate Charles he found in Germany, a diversion for his griefs, and a field for his

ardour. At the head of the armies of the League, and amidst various fortunes, he finished his career with the intrepidity of a soldier and the talent of a great captain, in the thirty years' war, the religious spirit of which will be soon better understood. This was his true vocation, and his generous mind, too hasty for governing, spent itself easily in the career of arms.

While France was impiously staying with her intrigues, treasures, and soldiers, the progress of the revival of Catholicity in Germany; at the same time leaguing herself under the guidance of a churchman, with those abominable Swedes. who had the awful impiety to give the blessed Eucharist to their horses-while these things were passing, Lorraine fought for her faith and perished a martyr-like Poland; for the faults of her sovereign cannot deprive her of the merit of her heroic sufferings. She lost her nationality, her strength, and even the ancient monuments of her history; Louis XIII. tore the feudal crown from her brow, dismantled her fortresses, and destroyed her castles.\* Foreign domination, however, was the least of her misfortunes. The general war, of which it was the theatre, made other ruins. Swedes and French, Spaniards and Germans, enemies and partizans, overran the country, leaving desolation and horror in their track. Fourier renders homage to the conduct of the French soldiers, in a letter, written

<sup>\*</sup> Dom Calmet gives a long list of these barbarities. No relies remain, so that the traveller in Lorraine does not meet with those ruins of fortified castles so frequently, and in so picturesque a manner, arresting his progress on the Alsatian side of the Vosges.

in 1633. "They behave with much modesty, forbearance, and devotion, giving an example to others bearing arms, and seem to have taken for their motto the words of St. John the Baptist in the desert: 'Trouble no man, do no injury, and

be content with your pay.""

But the Protestant fanaticism of the Swedish soldiers illumined their march by setting fire to churches and violating the sanctity of the cloister. Their standard, it is said, represented a human figure cut in half, a sword and a torch, and bore the inscription of "Lorraine." The remembrance of these terrible days is not effaced from the minds of the people. At the present day the inhabitants of Lorraine speak of the Swedes as monsters, to whom every evil is attributed.

Historians unite in agreeing that no besieged cities ever suffered more terrible disasters than did those of Lorraine, in the war which took place at this period of our holy Father's history. "The pestilence," writes an author of the time and country, "broke out at Easter, 1630, and did not stop its ravages till March, 1637. At the same period, war and famine attacked the country. These three scourges were so destructive that, in many places, they left but a fifth part of the population behind them—a fact which is confirmed by the ancient registers of the communities.\*.....At Nancy, twenty-five or thirty persons died daily; their naked bodies were hastily cast into a deep pit, without any distinction. In other places

<sup>\*</sup> An inscription still exists at Doncïeres, recording the survival of an old dame and her grandchild only, out of the entire population.

they were left unburied, a prey to dogs and other beasts.....Men were reduced to the extremity of eating one another.....Wild fruits and roots were sold at high price.....the land remained uncultivated and covered with thorns, and produced an immense number of venomous animals. every side appeared bands of poor people, wan and wretched, covered with rags, and exposed to the inclemency of the weather. The charity of St. Vincent of Paul, in coming to the succour of these wretched people, is well known. Twelve of his Lazarists came to Lorraine to administer every description of alms, besides their spiritual consolations, so that great numbers were fed by his hand, while the name of their benefactor remained entirely unknown to them. While hatred to France was strong in the hearts of this people, they owed the bread that nourished them, and the clothes that covered their naked limbs, to the generosity of a Frenchman. The steward of his bounties made fifty-four journies without ever being obstructed, though the country was filled with bands of robbers, and famished soldiers. This is the more surprising, as he carried with him twenty thousand, and, on one occasion, one hundred and fifty thousand livres. The total sum he thus sent was one million six hundred thousand livres, in specie, besides a quantity of linen, clothes, and food. He followed the people of Lorraine in their flight, and received several of their families in Paris, where he organized a special society for their relief.

Our blessed Father, it will readily be imagined, did not remain inactive during this period. He possessed not the immense resources of St. Vincent of Paul; he had not, like him, the riches of France to distribute, nor were the purses of opulent friends at his disposal. In the midst of ruin and contagion, he begged of beggars for his poor. "I know not," he writes, "what saint amongst the living to invoke. Nobody will either lend or give us any thing. People are dying with hunger around me. The land is nothing worth. It remains fallow and uncultivated. The ancient revenues of the farms, the annuities by which they formerly subsisted during the golden age, are now either swallowed up for a time or altogether lost.".....The corn, money, and furniture belonging to the religious houses, were soon exhausted, and the two congregations reduced to the greatest straights. All they had to give now was themselves. The good Father and his religious, therefore, devoted their lives to the care of the sick, who were lying in heaps under tents in the fields. We have seen the general of the Canons sink under his exertions in 1632. Many others followed him to meet the reward of their charity. In a letter to his nuns, Fourier writes: "Your excellent letters were bedewed with tears, shed at the receipt of others from certain of our reverend fathers.....announcing the death of a great many of our brethren and speaking of nothing but pestilence and maladies of every description—with which many of our friends are attacked-dearness of provisions and famine, &c." He also writes again: "We felt great regret at the separation of the good Sisters of St. Nicholas. Some went straight to heaven to receive their crowns; others to a little hermitage, while the remainder stayed in their poisoned house, where

the poor dear creatures (pauvrettes) live from hand to mouth in daily expectation of being carried off. Jesus! what a sad sight! My heart is so oppressed that I can neither speak or write without shedding abundance of tears, and I wish it would please our Lord to afflict me in their stead. I know not how to express it, but I do not remember ever having felt, in all my life,

so overpowering a sensation."

The danger in which his parishioners were placed afflicted him still more. Pestilence and famine reigned in the town. "Bread is very dear, and the most part of that which we have (not half or a quarter enough) is but poor stuff. Our doors are daily surrounded by famishing families, crying aloud for food. Our houses and streets are filled with sick, lying on a little straw, and many on the bare ground; those under cover huddling together—I was going to write near the fire, but, alas! the poor creatures have

no wood to burn-near the fireplace."

Another letter, of 13th September, 1631, ends with these words: "We are tremblingly awaiting the hour when the contagion shall spread itself throughout Mattaincourt." In such peril he watched over his flock like a tender shepherd. On the 23rd of May he made the following admirable reply to the religious of Chalons, who begged a visit from him. "My poor parishioners are in extreme necessity for want of bread, and from danger of the contagion, and methinks that while I am with them some effort will be made to supply them with some kind of remedy. I see, on one side of me, a multitude of people in extreme want and danger, of whose souls I

shall one day have to render an account to our good God; on the other some half dozen good girls, plentifully supplied with every thing, who wish to see me on business about which they can easily write.....Would it be reasonable or just for me to abandon these poor creatures, who are so numerous, and who cry after me, begging of me and reminding me that I am obliged, in conscience and before God, to succour them. For though, simply bearing the title of curé, that is, pastor, I am father, mother, physician, nurse, servant, comforter, guide, and every thing to them, holding the place of Him who would worthily acquit himself of the duties thus imposed upon me!.....I ask you, having the fear of God and his love so deeply impressed on your holy souls, and being most dear children of our sweet Mother of Mercy, can you persuade me, a parish priest, to abandon my people and to hesitate to die of hunger with them, if it be the will of God; to neglect them now in their trouble, when they require every consolation which the holy sacraments and the word of God can supply, and to refrain from begging for their relief from those who have the means of helping 'them? While they cry out for bread at Mattain-court, shall the traitor to God and his people amuse himself in France, feeding luxuriously? No, no! my good sisters! If you knew what it is to be a priest in a parish where two or three hundred people are without bread, money, or work, have no furniture to sell, friends or neighbours able to assist them, cannot get any credit, and, over and above this, many seized with sickness, you would indeed exclaim: 'Ah! do

not abandon these poor creatures; keep faithful to them during these heavy times; abandon, for the present, all intercourse with others, except for the purpose of begging from the rich in the neighbouring towns and villages. Make or procure soup for them every day, in which they may soak their mouldy half-baked oaten bread. Do try to comfort your poor sick, starving, dying people!".....

But this desire of the good priest, to live and die with his people, was not permitted him to enjoy. His attachment to the house of Lorraine was well known,\* and the cold reserve with which his opposition was manifested displeased the conqueror. "Being one day," says Father Bédel, "called to attend upon a distinguished character, whose person he much dreaded, our Father ingenuously said, that if St. Nicolas came on earth to do what this person wished to effect during his stay in the town, he did not think he should like to face him. Indeed, his apprehension was so great, that he could scarcely walk to the place of meeting. He was questioned on a state affair of great importance, but he escaped through his silence, answering with 'Yes' and 'No,' or some such laconical monosyllable, to the queries that were put to him by this person."

Notwithstanding his desire to conceal his

name, Father Bédel says enough to enable us to guess who this "distinguished personage" was. Richelieu thought, perhaps, to intimidate

<sup>\*</sup> I see, by a letter written in 1617, that this 'fanalical' priest of Lorraine begs his religious to pray for the intention of France.

the good priest, whose sanctity could not protect him from the man who said Mass, booted and spurred. A disagreable affair, in which our Father was involved, furnished the desired pretext. I have spoken of the sudden and clandestine marriage of Francis of Lorraine. The adventure is thus related by Dom Calmet. Francis having received intelligence that Marshal de la Force had been ordered to take the princesses out of his hands, urged Claudia to marry him instantly, and thus save their house. Claudia consented the more readily to this proposal, as she had for some time had a great esteem and affection for the prince. The dispensation, which it was necessary to procure, on account of the near relationship of the parties, was the only difficulty in the way. At ten o'clock at night, the prior and sub-prior of the Regular Canons of St. Remy's Abbey, at Luneville, were sent for..... The duke begged these religious to tell him whether, under these circumstances, the marriage would be valid or not. They asked time to consult the canonists. Two hours later they replied, that the prince, in quality of diocesan bishop, could dispense himself from the publication of the bans, or give any other person the right so to do; that, in reality, the dispensation granting permission to marry within the second degree of consanguinity should come from the pope, but that bishops had been known to grant it in extreme cases. "Such," said the prince, "is certainly the case with me. I hope the pope will view it in the same light." After, this the prior of St. Remy bestowed the nuptial benediction on the Duke Francis and the Princess Claudia. The marriage being immediately con-

summated, the prince sent a courier to Rome to explain the matter to the pope, to obtain the dispensation, and to take back the cardinal's hat." To this Dom Calmet adds, in a note, that the cardinal, having a very strict conscience, was hardly satisfied with the decision of the religious until he had seen their authorities." But the religious of St. Remy were of our Father's order of Regular Canons. As soon as Richelieu was informed of the transaction, he ordered the guilty prior, or, if he could not be found, the general of the order, to be arrested. They were both at Belchamp when a French company surrounded the abbey. The prior immediately surrendered himself, and the captain thought himself freed from the necessity of taking the other. Another band was, however, sent to capture him, and our Father was obliged to wander from place to place, allowing a few intimate friends only to know the secret of his resting place. He remained long concealed at St. Mihiel, in the gardener's cottage. He once fell into the hands of the enemy, and owed his escape to the humble osier cart which he generally made use of, and which was allowed to pass, as the soldier could not imagine it to be the equipage of the general of an order. In this extremity he suffered great distress of mind, together with the severest bodily privations. "I seem to think," he writes in one of his letters at this period, "that I should be delighted to find some situation as churchwarden to some little village church, or to teach children to read, (I am not equal to undertake writing,) or to beg my bread from door to door, if I could find people charitable enough to relieve me.".....

Treated like a malefactor, often without nourishment or shelter, his only chance was exile. In the month of May, 1636, at the age of seventy-two years, after a last adieu to his unhappy country and to all that he held dear, he entered Franche-Comté.

This step, being misinterpreted fifty years later, (when information was being sought respecting our Father's virtues), became an obstacle to his beatification. He was reproached with abandoning his flock at the moment of danger. The reader will not look to me for a justification of his conduct. He will never believe that he, whose history he has been reading, was a man to fly like a coward, in order to cheat death of the poor remainder of a life devoted to good deeds. This moral excuse would suffice for our purpose; there is, however, another which his biographers put forth and which is conclusive-Fourier was no longer a parish priest. The duties of general being incompatible with those which a benefice with cure of souls imposed, his first care, from 1632, had been to obtain a successor.\* So simple a fact was doubtless overlooked in the idea that the curé of Mattaincourt belonged to the Congregation, and the good Father held his position there as general independent of those reciprocal feelings of affection which attached him to the spot. He did not therefore abandon his post. Besides, what could a proscribed wanderer do for his parishioners or his country? He was much

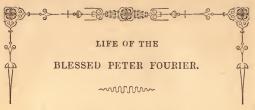
<sup>\*</sup> See "Vie ou éloge du Rev. P. Fourier." "Conduite de la Providence dans l'établissement de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame." "These truths," says the author of this last work, "have been so well proved at Rome, that no one in future can call them into question."

better able to serve them from afar in a country still under the sway of Spain. That our Father himself did not consider he had betrayed his duty, the following letter will show. Writing on the 17th February, 1638, from the place of his exile, to a Regular Canon, who had a cure in Lorraine, he wishes him a long life and success in his pastoral duties, and then adds: "I feel that there is a manifest presage in that excellent sentence in your letter: 'Patience! I will take courage and follow my people into the woods.' Most worthy and admirable words !..... They would have been still better had they not been followed by those other words of yours, which seem to detract somewhat from their merit: 'that is, if I cannot find any other retreat!' What mean you by this, pious Father? That if you can gain some strong castle or fortified town you will hasten to it, and leave your dear flock in the woods without a shepherd, all trembling with fear and dying with cold, hunger, and disease ?\* .....I think, Rev. Father, you would do well to retract in your soul and before God these few last words, and repeat simply, boldly, and heartily the first part of your sentence: 'Patience! I will take courage and follow my people into the woods.' Their danger shall be mine; their abode my dwelling. I will live and die with them and for them; my life is not mine, but God's and my people's".....

Would one priest have so rigorously reproved another for conduct of which he felt himself

guilty?

<sup>\*</sup> Vous laisserez vos chères brebiettes dans le bois, sans pasteur tremblottantes de peur et languissantes de froid, de faim, de maladies?



### CHAPTER VIII.

EPULSED on all sides, from fear of his bringing the pestilence, the poor stranger was welcomed at Gray, where he fixed himself. The house in which he lived is still seen, an elegant building of the Renaissance, with charming turrets and galleries, painted and emblazoned, and presenting many curious details; and in this house is preserved intact, the humble spot ennobled by the death of the saint.\* Here he completed those admirable constitutions for his nuns, and directed the dispersed houses of the two congregations. While advising the houses in France, with a calm resignation, he sustained the courage of the others in their

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;He had reserved for himself, in this spacious and magnificent dwelling, a small room, which we have visited, and its mean and dilapidated state increased the high idea that we had already entertained of the saint's humility and disinterestedness. Imagine a room four metres (about thirteen feet) square, tiled with red and green bricks, and bearing a cold and tarnished appearance, and lighted by three small windows in leaden frames. Behind the chimney several small cavities are seen, in which the poor Father, who deprived himself even of necessaries to relieve the sick, used to bake a little coarse bread, his only nourishment. Nothing can be plainer than the furniture of this little garret. A small capboard, with its worm-eaten doors, still remains to show the indigence of its former occupant."—M. Charles Grouet. Article in the Esperance of Nancy, 14th August, 1845.

struggles by his excellent and lively letters. His whole correspondence at this period, though imbued with melancholy, bears the stamp of serenity, and even sometimes descends to playful gaiety.

One of the fathers of his order and twelve nuns had accompanied him. These immediately opened a free school for the poor children of the

town.

As to our Father, he gave missions in the neighbouring places, and faithful to the last to his love of instructing, he taught, like the exiled and dying Gerson, little children in the schools.\* He engaged himself as chaplain to a convent in the city to obtain his livelihood. It grieves one's heart to see this great man, who so well merited to enjoy the fruit of his labours in a tranquil repose, obliged to fly his country at an age when the thoughts should be fixed on preparing for eternity, and repaying by his labours the hospitality afforded him in his old age. All external succour was intercepted by highway robbers, and he was obliged to live on alms. He drew, with touching simplicity, a sketch of their mode of life and their precarious existence in the following letter: "I am assured our sisters have but half their strength since they have been in this country, for want of good and sufficient nourishment. Our good Mother Bernard

<sup>&</sup>quot;As if to contribute his share in paying for the hospitality accorded to them, he not only caused the religious who accompanied him to teach the youth, but he himself, feeble as he was, went every day to the schools, and took the most stupid and troublesome of the scholars, and taught them with admirable patience."—Bedel.

(dear soul) preserves order; and of our poor sisters who are not attacked with sickness, two are daily engaged in the school, which, by the grace of God, continues to fill, another serves in the kitchen, and one or two are employed in sewing either the tattered garments of our sisters, patching their veils, and mending the clothes of Father Terrel, your humble servant, and our boy. One is in the infirmary, that is, I mean, one healthy one, to nurse the sick, another is porter, and does nothing but tramp up and down a lofty staircase to attend on her companion in the infirmary, and to open the door for Margaret, who goes about the city in search of provisions. I thank you for having sent such good paper, by our Husson. I did not get it, however, as he was robbed of it on his way, as also of his money and clothes, and he arrived here almost bare, with nothing but accounts of eleven or twelve pounds of debts, which we were obliged to pay, and to clothe him, though cloth is very dear, as indeed is every thing necessary to sustain our wretched existence."

The religious of France, were not the only ones to remember their Father. Duke Charles, who was nearly ruined and reduced to eat horseflesh in his famishing camp, did not forget his faithful subject. This noble prince wrote to him on the 17th of September, 1639: "I have ordered," he writes, "my steward Gerard to give you a trifle for yourself, or your religious, who, I understand, are in great necessity from the little assistance the poverty of the place can afford them. I have still a little property, and I have

told Gerard to sell it rather than to let you want any thing. I implore you not to be as you formerly were, but to tell him how he can best serve you. If you will not yourself, at least let Father Terrel, or your religious do so. At the same time I beseech you not to forget us, for we are in times when we have more need of your remembrances and prayers than ever. We must remember that it is certain we shall not get any thing from the world, but must look to God for every thing. Thrice happy is he who, disengaged from these pursuits, retired in some tranquil spot, has but to say his chaplet! I hope you say yours sometimes for me, and that you will continue to love one who is, with all his heart, your most affectionate friend, Charles de Lorraine."

Fourier, in his answer to this cordial and frank letter, writes: "May God accomplish your desires with glory, such glory as is befitting a prince—a noble and brave prince—a Prince of Lorraine! His good subjects, who love him tenderly, daily offer their supplications to our Lord, that it may please Him to restore him speedily and gloriously

to his kingdom."

Matters did not, however, run in this channel. Fourier received most sad accounts from Lorraine: "his poor desolate country, where all die of pestilence, hunger, sword and pistol wounds, anxieties, and alarm." He writes, on hearing of the pillage of Mattaincourt by the Swedes: "Our poor village has been completely ravaged, laid waste, and pillaged: men, goods and houses have fallen a prey to the sack: there is no grain in the fields or in the barns, and there only remains a few poor creatures who are languishing and

dying of pestilence and famine, and suffer every kind of rough treatment. The church pavement has been torn up to see whether there were any treasures concealed with the dead, and it is turned into an heretical conventicle!"

Disease and famine, at last broke out in his retreat. From the end of 1638, all the ills which for ten years had desolated Lorraine, invaded Franche-Comté, with the hostile armies. "He whom you call general," writes our Father, "is in a foreign country......Whenever he passes through the streets he meets numbers of poor sick people dying of hunger; some lying naked on the pavement, others on a little straw, and often he finds the dead bodies of those who have died in the night without any assistance or consolation. He is deeply grieved at these daily scenes; seeing he can be of no service in any manner; and when entering into himself he resolves and makes purposes of remaining constantly with these afflicted people, thinking that he has deserved what they endure a thousand times more than these poor creatures."

In the midst of such distress of mind and body the venerable old man wore away, though the peace of his soul enabled him to bear patiently his increasing infirmities. "I have not yet obtained of God," he writes, "to be able to go about without a stick, which I carry, and which supports me like a poor beggar, when I go to say Mass. If we were at carnival time, I think those who see me hobbling along, carrying my cloak and stick so awkwardly, followed by a little slipshod, half-naked urchin; seeing us, I say, in this plight, people would fancy we were

masqueraders, who had taken the strange idea of diverting others at this said time. This I say to bring a smile to the lips of our dear sick reverend brother."

His thoughts at this time, as is the case with dying persons, carried him into grand projects and delightful illusions. Writing to his nuns, he tells them that "he hopes soon to be able to join them and to spend some time with them. Oh," he exclaims, "how favoured shall I be by God if He permits me, and my superiors should not object, on account of my old age and of my stick, which I carry every where, to rejoin

vou!"

Our blessed servant of God was, however, called, not to his earthly, but his heavenly country. "He was attacked by fever, which increased in violence. He, however, went to the convent of the Annunciation on the 11th October, 1640, said Mass, and heard confessions. He returned, overcome with exhaustion, parched with thirst, and with a strong aversion for all nourishment. The most famous physician of the place was sent for; 'It is all in vain,' cried out the holy man, 'I feel that my end is at hand.' Then did they who surrounded his death-bed behold a spectacle well calculated to confound the presumption and dangerous confidence of some at their last moments; then did they see this good priest, who had only known the world and sin to detest and fly them, tremble at the approach of the judgments of God, who sees imperfections in His noblest works, and confess with the saintly bishop of Hippo (whose disciple he was) that he feared lest he should be eternally condemned. He soon, however, recovered his serenity, and seemed to enjoy a foretaste of the happiness awaiting him, and which he so well merited. He held his crucifix pressed to his lips, and implored his Redeemer to shed one drop of His precious blood upon his departing soul; then, invoking Mary, he cried, 'Show thyself a mother!' and this he repeated. He requested the attendants to read to him the holy death of St. Augustine, anxious to imitate so saintly a model, even to his death. Afterwards he recited the psalm Miserere, but on arriving at the verse, 'Cast me not away from thy sight,' he trembled, and his tears for some time choked all utterance. After having received the Viaticum and Extreme Unction, he spent the remainder of his time in perpetual thanksgiving and ravished in ecstatic reveries. The religious, seeing him on the point of death, knelt down and begged him to bless them and the whole Congregation, at which the saint raised his hands thrice, made the sign of the cross over his body, invoked the sweet names of Jesus and of Mary, and with his eyes fixed on heaven, calmly slept in the Lord, on the 9th (or 11th) of December, 1640, having just completed his seventy-sixth year."\*

<sup>\*</sup> I have taken this account of the blessed Peter's last moments from Pillard, - Trans.





#### BLESSED PETER FOURIER.



## CHAPTER IX.



HORT and rapid as this sketch of the life of blessed Peter Fourier must appear, it has doubtless awakened an interest towards him in my readers. Many will have seen his name for the first time; they have, I doubt not, been led

to form some knowledge and love of the holy man. His name must ever be inscribed among the chief of those illustrious characters—as a man, a writer, and a priest—who flourished at the beginning of the 17th century. It is, however, in their private correspondence, rather than their external actions, that men's true natures are best seen. As I have been able to introduce but few of the Father's letters in the course of this narrative, I have thought that a few selections in this chapter would gratify the reader.

The principal letters which have come down to us are addressed to the Congregation of our Blessed Lady. The task was no slight one of directing, amidst rivalries and persecutions, so many houses, of answering such multiplied questions, of exhorting, consoling and rebuking. His letters, as he avows, are written hastily, without

any study. "I wish you to write to me freely simply, and trustingly, the first words which come into your head, as I always do when I write to you." He gave himself up entirely to this sweet commerce; his style exhibits a lively affection and innocent familiarity, though tempered by an almost scrupulous reserve, and he rarely indulges in that somewhat feminine tenderness of expression which forms the charm of St. Francis of Sales' letters. He seems to fear and avoid what he calls "that unmeasured friendship, although proceeding through God." "It were well," he writes, "if, for her sake and ours and the greater clinging to God, she moderated her external affection for us, as I was myself once properly warned, I ought to act towards you."

warned, I ought to act towards you."

In order to avoid any particular feeling in regard to those with whom he corresponded, he never wrote to one sister personally, but to the whole community. Such letters always began by "Good and beloved sisters in our Lord," and he rarely signed his name but ended with "Your brother and servant in God." Once only he wrote directly to Sister Alice, to rebuke sharply this strong mind which he so well understood.

"Sister Alice, if you desire your own renown, always write your name boldly, in fine large characters, on every page of the letters you write to different persons, as I find is done in the last you sent me. If, however, you seek purely and simply our Lord and the good of the community, follow the ordinary form prescribed in the rules of signing your letters, which is: "Your most humble servants, daughters of the Congregation of our Lady." Vanity is very subtle and dangerous,

and easily slips from the fingers of those who write much."

Whenever he had occasion to speak with the religious they were veiled, and behind the grating. Of his conduct, in this regard, Bédel says: "He who gave him grace to commence and achieve this work, also so guarded him with prudence that, during the course of more than forty years in which he has directed these virgins, no slandering tongue or envious mind has ever raised any suspicion against him, or spoken the least word against his honour, so great was the opinion entertained of his integrity and of his circumspection in his

conduct towards his adopted children."

One must be struck with the open, elevated, and generous spirit, with which he every where endeavours to inspire the religious. "Do not trouble yourselves," he writes, "about those things you mentioned in your last. Leave them alone; say nothing to the world against them, but continue to live as if you did not know of their existence, or of what they say and do against you. Endeavour to excel them in humility, patience, modesty, charity, purity of intention, and in diligence and faithfulness towards your little ones. If it come from God, you must rejoice that he has raised up many to do what you are doing—as something most needed and useful in this century.....Should you be driven from your house, you will find another. If your day scholars, or even your boarders, leave, what then? have patience. You will support yourselves by your work, and wait for better times." (3rd December, 1612.) "Do not be surprised at these new schools; you must not be sorry to see that our Lord and the people are served in different places by different kinds of persons.....and well pleased should you be to see others imitating you, and excelling you in holiness; so many good people will certainly bring about something excellent." (13th Feb., 1624.) "Endeavour to serve God and the public with fidelity.....and should other religious get in advance of you, and excel you in instructing youth, in God's name let us thank His Provi-. dence and goodness for having in our age raised up on all sides so many workmen and work-women to be employed in the harvest of souls; and the more numerous, the greater the consolation. We must not desire to be alone in these great conquests; let us take example from those who may perform the work better than ourselves." (22nd November, 1625.) "Let them reap, and quietly lay up their harvest in heaven. What matters it to God, and the people, by whom this work is done, whether by you or by others? .....Let us be on our guard against a certain itching, and secret disease, of unceasingly magnifying ourselves and our own works." (21st August, 1628.)

He insists strongly upon this last point, and severely denounces that desire of acquiring land, building, and grasping at possessions, into which self-love insinuates itself under the name of zeal. He therefore recommends the greatest care in the management of money, mixed with prudence and moderation. "Act in such a manner," he writes in 1621, "so that your actions and consciences may be ever upright and pure before God and men, and be ever ready to render an

exact account of all monies and other property intrusted to you, as often as enemies, or other misinformed persons, calumniate you." "It is the property of God, St. Augustine, and of those poor good servants of God who are to be supported for the next five hundred years. Take good care of it, for it is not your own"..... Again, in 1624, "You insinuate, in your former letters, that you are under some apprehensions of not being able to procure wherewith to live, and now you talk to me of paving your chapel ......Pay your debts, which you are bound in justice to do, and do not mind the pavement, which you are urged to lay down by devotion and prudence alone; now these should always follow justice, and not precede her.....I hold that you ought never to incur new debts until the old ones are paid." (10th March, 1617.) "Take care that prosperity does not render you blind and miserable.....lest so much success dazzle you and cause you to stumble. I assure you it makes me uneasy, and fear some coming reverse of fortune." (Circular of the 10th March, 1622.)

Their good Father had, however, rather to warn his children against discouragement than against vanity. He busies himself with their

wants with a tender solicitude.

"I tell you, in the compassion which I feel for you, in the depth of my soul, at this sad commencement, that you will see in time how much you have gained by these delays, these borrowed dwellings, this loan, and this hunger and thirst with which I have often seen you rise from table where you have not had sufficient nourishment;

nor have I forgotten the bitter cold with which your feet and hands have been attacked, your insufficient clothing, your want of fire, your great trouble in seeking at one time for wood, bread, or good water; at another Masses, confessor's advice, and oftentimes consolation." Be in no ways afflicted; I will tell you of a fountain, full of every good, from which you have only to draw, for it is ever flowing for such as live in the way I believe you do. Fear not, dear sisters, you will want nothing.....Do you think your beloved spouse has forsaken you? Our Lord sometimes seems to withdraw Himself from his friends, but He never does this entirely. He is not far off: He is only hid behind a screen or grating, and waits there for a time without saying anything, in order to watch the countenances and hear the sighs of His dear spouses." (27th October, 1620.)

The Canons were not, however, a whit richer than these poor women, and the good Father had to seek alms for them. He interested in their favour, the least distressed of his nuns. "Would to God," he writes, "you would bear with me in my insolence, my presumption, and my unmeasured confidence......Bear with me, I pray you, and pardon me. Methinks I hear you asking, Why are we to do all this? Why? I am almost ashamed to tell you. I have an humble petition to make, imploring you to take pity on the poor fathers and brothers of the Congregation of the Saviour of our souls; to draw from the deep well of your compassion, a few drops of pity, in order to give them some repose, to recreate and console them. But what compassion shall we show? I hear you ask. Ah! now I tremble.

The great St. Paul, wishing to say something on a certain subject, of which he had some appre-hension, could not bring himself to commence his discourse; he goes round his subject, returns again, then attempts to commence but cuts short, hesitates, retraces his way, like (to use the comparison of St. Chrysostom) a noble Spanish or Tartary steed who, about to leap over a broad, deep, and dangerous brook, advances to its edge, then suddenly starts back, and at last, taking courage and resolution, he springs over the leap." .....He then tells them that the fathers are in deep distress, and hints that if they are able to repay them part of some money which they had lent the sisters it would be very acceptable..... "Good Lord! what a jump I have taken! Where am I? I am exhausted and quite confounded! Am I in the ditch, or this side of it, or beyond it, or where? What have I done? What have I said? My ears are filled with a deafening noise which quite overpowers me.".....

This lively and clever style is more particularly met with in those letters in which he wishes to insinuate some counsel or advice. Sending a curate to his successor, he writes as follows:—
"You receive with this, the reverend father who is going to submit himself to your direction. If in any transport or pious fit of excess of fervour, in sustaining the truth of any proposition, he chances to exceed the bounds of discretion prescribed for him, let your reverence quickly borrow the little flagelet, which the servant of one of the Gracchi held behind his master, and make use of this sweet instrument to change, not only the tone, but the matter of the father's

discourse. Should your reverence retain this flagelet, to make use of it for any other purpose, such as speaking to your poor servant, when he is slothful in bringing your meals, has broken a glass, or left a third of his morning's work undone, in such case he need not repent of it, in his evening examen, nor accuse himself of having made use of an instrument stolen from a Roman servant, or of having imported a piece of foreign gold into our land of promise. This is a joke, to amuse your reverence." (4th April, 1634.)

When he has occasion to blame or correct, he does it with a good humour full of grace and wit. Thus he writes to a religious:

"You are very cunning and malicious in such

"You are very cunning and malicious in such things as relate to God. I have been engaged since yesterday in rummaging among all the resources of my malice, but have not been able to find anything like that which you have so readily brought forth from your treasury......
Your ideas are very well conceived, and put into a very good form. It is true the orthography is at fault, but that is not surprising in women, and it were better, perhaps, that it should be so, in order that people may not doubt that these letters are their own compositions, and not borrowed from others. A present of fruit, which a person believes to have grown in your garden. a person believes to have grown in your garden, although several particles of dirt may adhere to them—even as many as thirty-four, the number of faults in your letter, which I have noted in the margin—such fruits, I say, will be more agreeable to the recipient than the most scrupulously clean and finest fruit which might be thought to be the produce of, and stolen or borrowed from, another garden. Nevertheless, I have not been deterred from making my remarks, which you are at liberty to peruse at your leisure." (26th November, 1631.)

He finds fault with the convent of Chalons in the following manner:-" I asked this little man whom you sent me if you had much wheat. He answered, 'Seven measures.'—'How do you know that?'-' Because I often go to sweep the granary, when it is in a very dirty state.'—'How long do you stay there each time?'—'About two hours.'—'How?'—'I am shut up there, and one of the sisters brings me something to eat.'—'Have they a good garden?'—'Yes.' 'Who attends to it?'—'I do all I can for it, 'Who attends to it?'—'I do all I can for it, which is not much, as I understand very little about gardening.'—'Do you work in it often?' Yes, rather so.'—The poor lad answered very well; I must not be angry with him; but I do not think (under correction) that you ought to employ him at this work. You have sisters enough, thank God, to sweep the granary and work in the garden. I therefore beg of you not to admit this boy, or any other, within your cloister, without strict necessity and the express leave of the bishop." (1626.)

The mayor of Mirecourt, in a time of scarcity, spoke of the religious, as "useless mouths." Fourier brings him to his senses, and thus writes

Fourier brings him to his senses, and thus writes to his brother: "The greater part of these women belong to the town, and would eat just the same were they with their parents—nay even more and better meat; or had they married husbands who loved good cheer, and who might perhaps have

come from distant parts to marry and live amongst us, and they and their children would consume infinitely more victuals than these poor consume infinitely more victuals than these poor single women....How is it that at the market of Dompaire, you neither find so much wine or corn in the market-place, or pastry, and other things, as you see every Saturday at Mirecourt? It is because you have more buyers, eaters and drinkers. The greater the number of your people the larger supply of provisions will you have. There is no more difficulty in obtaining food at Mirecourt at the present day, then there food at Mirecourt, at the present day, than there was, I think, in my grandfather's time, when there were not more than three hundred and fifty families in the place; and when your children can number three thousand they will find plenty to eat and drink....The mayor and other good people who form his council have sense enough to understand this." Here is a little treatise on political economy, and an excellent defence of these good women, whom we find the municipal power ever ready to find good reasons to persecute.

Fourier's pen also furnishes us with passages which show a great knowledge of character.

"Wild or imperious minds, and such as are

wild or imperious minds, and such as are subject to violent and dangerous passions, rarely adapt themselves to a conventual life. Even should they pass through the novitiate, and some years beyond it, endeavouring to conceal their feelings, and, as it were, living in a state of torpor, they nevertheless, at times, break forth and show their real nature." And again: "The ways of these conceited and over bold people are rather too rude, too sharp and too absolute. We had better wait a little until they are riper, as

we do with fruit, without touching them at present, because they are not yet dressed, as we say in this country." (10th November, 1629.) I much regret that the small space which I have allowed myself will not permit me to give more than a few curtailed passages. The following extracts show that mild morality which he

preached to his daughters:-

"Would to God, my dear sisters, that you knew the exceeding great value of patience, charity, and humility in everything, and particularly in gaining over those who wish you evil! These are the Christian's arms, and, united with tears, are especially suited to persons in your station. Make use of these drugs, which the Son of God, our Divine Physician, has brought from heaven to heal our own wounds, and those of our persecutors and calumniators."..." Bear patiently and charitably with all persons with whom you have to do, so that no one may have just reason to complain. Offend no one. Behave kindly, very kindly, to all who come to you, whether they be rich or poor."....." Walk with circumspection. Have an especial care not to be too communicative, but to keep a holy and prudent reserve.....Do not go about the town, nor allow a man to pass or touch your doorposts. Do not gossip, either at your door or elsewhere, to any church official; hold no conversations, make no visits or presents, and receive no letters with. out burning them unopened ..... Respect those ecclesiastics who do not respect you, but show your disdain to those who are particular in their marks of attention.".....

In the midst of serious affairs of directing

and advising his religious, we find an occasional bouquet of gentle pleasantry and amiable naïveté. Having addressed some counsels to a young nobleman about to marry, he adds: "To show the affection I bear you, and the desire I have to be present on the happy occasion, I contribute a dozen pears towards the breakfast."—" I am quite humpbacked," he writes, in a letter to the religious, "with so much writing. In order not to add to my infirmity, I shall content myself this time with telling you that I have a bagfull of all kinds of excuses, shuffles, delays, and other like relics of our first Father Adam; from this bag I take every day some piece, and having done so for the last sixty years, thanks to Father Adam, I always find it full. I know you often quiz what I write, but do not so this time. I pray you be not displeased."—" What business," say you quite angrily, "can be more important than that at St. Luneville?" I also say, in no better humour than you: "What affairs are more pressing than those of St. Mihiel? You are quite in a little paradise.....Of what do you complain? What more can you ask for, being already quite satiated? After such feasting I should only disgust you with my few little mouldy crumbs of oaten bread. Even though I had in my wallet some small crusts, for which some of you, who are perchance disgusted with your rich fare, should feel an appetite, (as some delicate ladies refuse at times delicious viands for others which are very common), still, in this case, I could not bring them to you yet." (1st May, 1625.)
"In taking the paper which Simon brought, I
fancied I saw St. Jerome behind the door, who

told me, that, since he had formerly taken the trouble to thank, in a beautiful letter, the Virgin Eustochia for the cherries she had sent him, I ought not to be so proud or indolent as to refuse to thank, with one of my miserable scrawls, a like present given to me by a great many virgins, who surpass in every quality the ancient Eustochia. I willingly listened to this doctor, and heard him say, among other things to his benefactress, that he did not find any cherries in the whole garden of the Holy Scriptures (and indeed neither is the word cherry or cherry-tree found there) which he could send in return for her fruit, but he, however, discovered in front of our Lord's temple two basketsful of figs......If I dared imitate him, I would arrange the figs after my fashion before presenting them to you, and say, I hoped that you, and all who shall enter your convent for ever, may be of the number of those delicious figs so sweet, so dear, and so precious."

I took notice, in the commencement of this book, of the strong affection of our holy Father for his family. I will now give a few extracts from his letters to them, if it be only to contradict the assertions of some writers, who insist on his stoical insensibility to this feeling. The first is written in his old age to his sister's son.

"While this terrible contagion remains, I shall feel quite uneasy about you; for you know how I love and cherish you, and the interest I take in every thing relating to you, who are so good, so honest, and so devout, following in this the good example and counsels of your dear mother. Make my remembrances to Mary, your wife, and to your little Margaret. Take good

nourishment, and keep your spirits up as joyously as you can. Good night, dear nephew; good night, Mary; good night, Margaret." (14th

May, 1636.)

"My dearest child, grace be with you, and peace and health, through our Lord.....My eyes and heart could better show you how deeply I feel your sickness than my pen and paper can do.....I thank kind Providence that my beloved neice, your dear partner, is not in danger, as she might be, in the midst of this contagion"..... (1638.)

The following letter, the last, perhaps, which his dying hand traced, will reveal, at one glance, the hearts of two great Christians. It is written

to his sister-in-law:

"You know the bargain I made with my late dear brother, your most amiable and pious husband, when, inspired by God, he advised, or rather gently pressed me, as a brother, to retire from the charge I had received from the Fathers of the Congregation of our Saviour, by a pure desire he had to have me live as a simple religious. I then told him that henceforward I would speak no more with him or his, and that if he passed the abbey, I would not see him, and that he must imagine his brother to be dead to the world. My dear good brother willingly agreed to this, and even encouraged me to its practice from the desire he had to see me as perfect a religious, as I believe he was a man. I have a thousand times admired his spirit, and his constancy in mortifying himself for the love of God, and his salvation in this ardent affection for me.....It is as necessary for me also to

moderate the expression of the feelings of this same brotherly love to please God and my brother, and to submit them to the control of religion. For this cause have I been, since that time, so sparing not only of my letters, but even of my kindness to your little people whom I love most dearly." Then, as if to make up for past neglect he gives the widow excellent advice upon the

education of her children.

"I can imagine I hear all the ladies of the town telling each other that dame Anne Martin is one of the most happy mothers in all Lorraine, and that James Fourier helps them most powerfully in heaven by his good prayers. This will not be of little avail, before God and the world in bringing about their happy marriage. Virtue is every where esteemed. Many parents, perhaps much richer than we are, would be glad to ally themselves in marriage with so well conducted a family. Fortune, however, should be of little consideration with you; in seeking for a husband for your daughters choose a man of intelligence and address, strong and of sound health, and able to provide for the family of which he may become the chief." Then entering with charming condescension into the details of their proposed marriages, the saintly uncle recommends their mother "to learn prudently from each, whether she willingly, and with all her heart, wishes to accept the husband selected for her. There must be a reciprocal affection; if that exists not, should even a kingdom, or all the wealth of the world be the prize, there will be no peace, but only extreme misery."

He exhorts the girls to shun vanities in clothes, jewellery, and other finery, "The most precious

jewels of my dear nieces will be their virtue, and their modesty.....These alone have often been considered a sufficient dowry, without any money. If you have not sixty france in your purse to give to Annon,\* (this was the sum my grandmother had for her dowry,) I should not be surprised; for we will marry her, and that well too, please God, since she is so modest." (31st Aug. 1640.) This sister, whose dearest interests engaged his greatest attention, previous to quitting this earth, was the same who had been associated with him in his works of benevolence. He wrote on the 3rd of August, 1628, to the religious of Mattain-"My sister Anne, who has been staying here the last few days, fears, that on account of the dearness of every thing, the poor people of Mattaincourt must be in great want of bread. To supply the weak and sick, she wishes me to advise you to bake bread as you did two or three years ago, when corn was so dear. This suggestion and good counsel has made me send you this boy, and write a few words to you, praying you to see what you can do, with God's aid and your scanty means, for the relief and comfort of this poor distressed people......Have some bread baked, and write out a list of those to whom it should be given, and portion it out every day, so as to give some one, others two, or even as much as five pounds, according to their necessities, and the number of their children. Above all be careful not to behave sharply, haughtily, or severely, in bestowing this charity upon these poor people; do not speak harshly to them, and be not too

<sup>\*</sup> The name of the intended of one of his nieces.

particular should they get a little over-weight, to take it from them again.....There is a poor woman at Bazoilles, called Estienne, on whom I beg you to take pity, and to attend to her poor orphans; send her a quartern of corn which I

give her for the love of God."

I must now bring my extracts from the correspondence of the blessed Peter Fourier to a close, and only regret I cannot give the reader an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with his letters. This correspondence is very extensive, and comprises letters to bishops, princes, and ladies of distinction; letters upon ecclesiastical discipline, and on spiritual direction; and letters of condolence, in which the good Father excelled.\* They are written in that free, simple, and illustrative style, which characterises the beginning of the XVIIth century. The clearness of his thoughts, and his purity of language, are particularly striking, especially when compared with the authors of Lorraine, at that period, whose style is very different from the French writers of the same time. The reader has already been made acquainted with his work of the Constitutions. Fourier has also left his religious another chef d'œuvre on "the primitive and legitimate spirit of the institute of the daughters of the Congregation of our Lady," a golden work, filled with the most

<sup>\*</sup> These letters are, unfortunately, dispersed in different places and among numerous persons. I trust, however, they will be collected and published, and they will assuredly take their place by the side of the best ascetical writers. Many equal those of St. Francis of Sales. (As soon as they appear it is the intention of the translator to publish an English version.

attractive piety. He also wrote, at the desire of his bishop, a work "on the duties of a parish priest:" but the unfinished manuscript was lost, it is not known how, perhaps, at the time of the Father's flight.\* It would seem that some intention was afterwards entertained of publishing this work, as one of the Father's biographers who wrote in 1746, says, in speaking of the duties of parish priests, "its value will be seen when it is given to the public." In a long letter addressed to two Regular Canons, who had taken cures in Switzerland during the emigration, Fourier seems to give a resumé of this work. He traces, under the semblance of their life, the ideal of a parish priest, and draws without intending it, his own portrait. Some shorter works, meditations, a treatise on faith &c., are known by the fragments inserted in the various lives of our Father. He left a great number of papers covered with notes and thoughts.+

The constitutions of the Canons show, according to theologians, a profound knowledge of ecclesiastical antiquity, and it is said, that Fourier always carried a volume of the Fathers with him. However, his name has not been treasured by the people as a wise, but as a good man. This

<sup>\*</sup> Some twenty pages are given by Father Bédel of this work as all that he had been able to collect.

<sup>† &</sup>quot;I am sorry," he writes to a religious, "that I cannot content our brother catechist. I formerly wrote these things in a very hasty manner on the first piece of paper I met with, and I know not what has become of them. I regret this now, and endeavour in my old age to amend in this respect, and not to lose thus what I brew, that it may serve some after purpose. But alas! it is very late! Sero sapiunt Phryges." (15th March, 1626.)

will ever be his characteristic, and it is strongly marked on his physionomy. The wretched pictures spread among the poor and those attached to some editions of his life are of no authority; but a contemporary portrait, still remaining in his family, represents him with that fine, venerable and open face which puts one in mind of St. Francis of Sales, and of Fenelon. He possessed a high forehead, aquiline nose, large but mild eyes, and a lofty stature. His whole figure gave one the idea "of a pure and innocent soul wedded to a fine form, that was preserved to his old age, so that time, which preys upon all things, spared him, because his soul knew not vice, whence springs deformity."\* Another writer says, that he had a mild and simple air and happy features; some portion of colour remained in his face in the midst of all his austerities, and, if I may call it so, the ruin of the exterior man. The tears he daily and nightly shed, did not diminish the brightness of his eyes.....He was very vivacious, but this served the more to show that his recollection and modesty were less virtues arising from his temperament than from profound impressions of the Spirit of God. He was never gloomy or sorrowful, only serious, and the sweetness of his words ever caused edification and esteem."+

The mere sight of him excited confidence and love. "It suffices," said St. Jane of Chantal, "to see the pious rector of Mattaincourt, to esteem him as a saint, although you know not

<sup>\*</sup> Bédel.

<sup>†</sup> Vie ou éloge du B. Père Fourier.—Anonymous, 1746.

that he is one." And Cardinal de Bérulle, having met our Saint at Nancy, said, on his return, that "if any one wished, at a single glance, to contemplate all the virtues united, he must go into Lorraine, and see the Father of Mattaincourt. He is so amiable that children, who care only for sweets, follow him every where, charmed by the attraction of his virtues; they surround him and sing in chorus out of his breviary, while he, after the example of our blessed Saviour, does not prevent them. Even the animals have felt the effects of his kindness. He had so much compassion for poor captive birds, who had been taken from their nests or otherwise obtained by any religious or servant, that he always made them give the poor creatures their liberty without hurting them. One winter, when the earth was covered with snow, which, like a cruel stepmother, deprived them of their food, the good Father came to their aid, causing some crumbs and grain to be strewed every day near his door, and he always went to his window to see his feathered friends take their meal."\*

Like all simple and Christian souls he was fond of nature, and took much pleasure in the solitude of the country. His ordinary walk was near a fountain not far from Mattaincourt, at the foot of a young tree which he had planted. This fountain has become celebrated under the name of the "Good Father's Spring;" as to the tree which also bore his name, it was some years ago still majestic and thickly spread, but at the centenary festival of his beatification, the pil-

grims so stripped it of its bark that nothing but the trunk remained, and this has since disappeared, the carrying away of this venerable witness of the prayers of the good Father of Mattaincourt bearing testimony to the reviving confidence in the Saint's protection. This spot has recently been consecrated by the erection of a beautiful little chapel by the inhabitants of Mattaincourt, in honour of their sainted pastor.

Their most precious possession, however, is the body of him who "having loved them during life loved them to the end." The magistrates of Gray claimed this prize as the reward of their hospitality. An order from the courts of Madrid and Brussels was necessary to make them surrender the body; and when the Canons bore it away, a scene occurred similar to the contest of the citizens of Tours and Poitiers after the death of St. Martin. In their way they stopped at Mattaincourt, and placed the body in the church for the night; the next morning the townspeople protested that the sacred remains should never be removed, that they would yield their lives rather than the body of their "good Father." Upon repeated commands from their sovereign they at length gave way, and the cortége was about to set out when the women rushed forth, threw themselves upon the bier, and declared they never could part with their treasure. To prevent bloodshed their wishes were complied with, and it now remains in the little church of which he was the rector; above the altar is seen the shrine, surrounded by ex-votos, while the altar-step is worn by the knees of pilgrims, who crowd to venerate the precious relics. Their number has so greatly increased that it became necessary to erect a new church which the present rector of Mattaincourt, a worthy successor of the blessed Peter Fourier, is accomplishing \* This revival of the popular devotion, which had been much restrained since the period of the first Revolution, dates from the celebration of the centenary of the beatification of their holy pastor, which took place with great rejoicings, in the midst of an immense concourse of pilgrims, in the year 1832.† Since that time active measures have been taken to obtain his canonization, the process of which is now pending at Rome, where it is confidently expected, that the Father of the faithful, and Head of Christ's Church on earth, will soon enrol in the calendar of the Saints the name of PETER FOURIER.

\* I have been favoured by the kindness of M. l'Abbé Hadol with two views of this church. It is in the style prevalent in France in the early part of the 14th century. The interior is remarkably grand, the nave and aisles being groined in stone. The chancel has an apsidal termination, a peculiarity very general in French churches. Any of my readers, who may wish to have a share in the good work, which is not yet completed, may do so, and participate in especial and extraordinary spiritual advantages, by addressing themselves to M. le Curé de Mattaincourt, prés Mirecourt Vosges, France.—Translator.

+ He was beatified in January, 1730.

BLESSED PETER FOURIER
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